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**THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF
SECOND AVENUE AND THE CORE AREA OF FAIRBANKS, ALASKA**

**A
THESIS**

**Presented to the Faculty
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
MASTERS OF ARTS**

**By
Marie M. Scholle, B. A.**

**Fairbanks, Alaska
May 1996**

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ABSTRACT

The City of Fairbanks changed and evolved over the years. The fifty years of the core-area's roller coaster economy was a mirror reflection of the city, as a whole. The infamous Second Avenue, also known as "Two Street," held a key to social reform and economic growth. This thesis explored the issues surrounding the social infrastructure of the "core-area" and how that infrastructure affected the economy of downtown Fairbanks.

In addition to the social and cultural phenomena, the political influences and their effect on the core-area's economic and social development was discussed. The government played a pivotal role in the economic direction of the downtown business district.

The conclusion of this thesis showed that the core-area of Fairbanks no longer enjoyed the status of the economic mainstay of the Fairbanks economy. However, this area was held as a historical business district and social gathering place for many Fairbanks events.

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The first death was the end of a downtown
that held much more than stores, it held
memories, values, and people who stayed
long enough to make a difference in our
lives.

Hugh Sidey-1992

INTRODUCTION

Second Avenue and the core area, from Noble Street to Barnette Street, from First Avenue to Fifth Avenue, reflected the attitudes and the economy of the City during the various segments of time of its existence. The core consisted of small and narrow streets, buildings built next to each as if to support each other. Clara Rust, a long time Fairbanks resident, saw the beginning of change in 1934 when she told Jo Ann Wold, "this once upon a time gold rush town was losing its frontier appearance....Gone were many of the false storefronts and the saloons with sawdust on the floor."¹

Fairbanks had become the hub of the interior. Aviation was an important link that connected Fairbanks to the rural communities and provided a cash flow to Second Avenue storekeepers. Truck transportation was an alternative method of bringing needed goods to Fairbanks, and the railroad also contributed by shipping core-area goods to other parts of Alaska. By 1939, the military construction period had begun and Fairbanks changed from a mining community to a construction town.²

During World War II, the federal government constructed the Alaska Highway. The military also built two military bases in the Fairbanks area and shaped the city's economic dependence on those bases, which still exists today. With the construction, the population of Fairbanks increased, providing more money to the core area, which came to be known as the Central Business District. According to Richard Cooley, "Thousands of workers were imported at wages two to three times as high as they had ever enjoyed."³

Although suburban expansion began in the early 1950s, there was little economic or social effect on the core area until the 1960s. With the increase in the population, traffic became a major problem in the core area. Lack of parking and poor air quality were two contributing factors in the shift from shopping in the core area to shopping in the outskirts

¹Jo Ann Wold. This Old House (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing, 1976), 24-25.

²Kay J. Kennedy, "Fairbanks, Alaska, Business Survey," Fairbanks Daily News Miner, February 1955, 3.

³Richard A. Cooley, Fairbanks, Alaska: A Survey of Progress (Juneau: Alaska Development Board July, 1954), 6.

of town. As more and more job seekers filtered onto Second Avenue, social problems began to surface. Public drunkenness and disorderly conduct drove away shoppers. Commercial offices closed and moved to a "safer" environment.

Before the local government could correct the social and economic problems, the Trans-Alaska Pipeline hailed the call for high paying jobs. More and more "outsiders" encroached on the core-area businesses, driving the remaining local groups out of their established routine. With the onslaught of the "outsiders" came the prejudice and criminal activities associated with the free flow of money. Prostitution, gambling, drug dealing, murder and sexual assaults replaced the small crimes of public indecency and drinking in public. In the mid 1970s, the frustrations and tension between Alaskan natives and non-native groups over unequal employment opportunities for Alaskan natives, combined with the prejudices of the Caucasian majority, erupted on the streets of Second Avenue in the form of riots.⁴ Some of the Second Avenue businesses decided that the outlying malls would better serve their customers, and more downtown shops moved away. With the town shops empty, the economy of the core area dwindled and the deterioration of Second Avenue began to progress more rapidly.

During the 1980s, Second Avenue suffered a depressed economy. The City Council established the Fairbanks Development Authority in an attempt to revitalize the core area. The first order of business was the destruction of the "old bar block." Many historic buildings were destroyed in this effort, partly because of their fire threat and numerous code violations. The Fairbanks Development Authority decided that it would be cost prohibitive to refurbish the buildings. Blacktop parking lots replaced the bars and liquor stores.

The in-fighting between local organizations hindered the progress of change for the core area. The Fairbanks Downtown Association was at odds with the Fairbanks Development Authority over its handling of "the bar block." The Fairbanks Chamber of

⁴ Frank Q. Sessions, Fairbanks Community Survey. A Profile of Poverty (Fairbanks: University of Alaska, 1967), 14.

Commerce went their own way in promoting Second Avenue and the core area, lobbying for the same funds that Main Street Fairbanks and the Fairbanks Downtown Association were attempting to secure. Because of the lack of coordinated efforts, Juneau legislatures were skeptical about pouring funds into the revitalization of Second Avenue. Projects stalled because of political friction among groups and Second Avenue paid the price for the inability of these groups to work together.

By the 1990s, Second Avenue seemed to be at its lowest point in history. The tour buses stopped coming to the core area with their rich load of tourist dollars, and the drunks littered the sidewalks of the core area.

In order to understand the plight of Second Avenue, and to find possible solutions to the economic problems facing businesses in the core area, one needs to look at the history of Second Avenue, the ideas and plans that were made but never followed. The key to the future is learning from past mistakes.

Fairbanks, the Early Years

Historically, Fairbanks has often been described as the "boom and bust" city of the interior. In 1901, when E. T. Barnette arrived on the banks of the Chena River and set up a tiny trading camp, the success of that camp depended upon the success of the nearby mining activities. This "tent city" trading post quickly grew to become the major trading center for the interior when gold was discovered in 1902 by Felix Pedro.⁵ Many outlying gold camps contributed to the success of the town, known as Fairbanks.

As the economy prospered on the riverbank, businesses found their way to Second Avenue. In 1907, Clara Rust described the tiny town in this way:

Fairbanks was a city of contrasts. I soon lost count of the saloons we passed packed side-by-side along the waterfront in slapdash log buildings, with false fronts, opening onto wooden sidewalks...

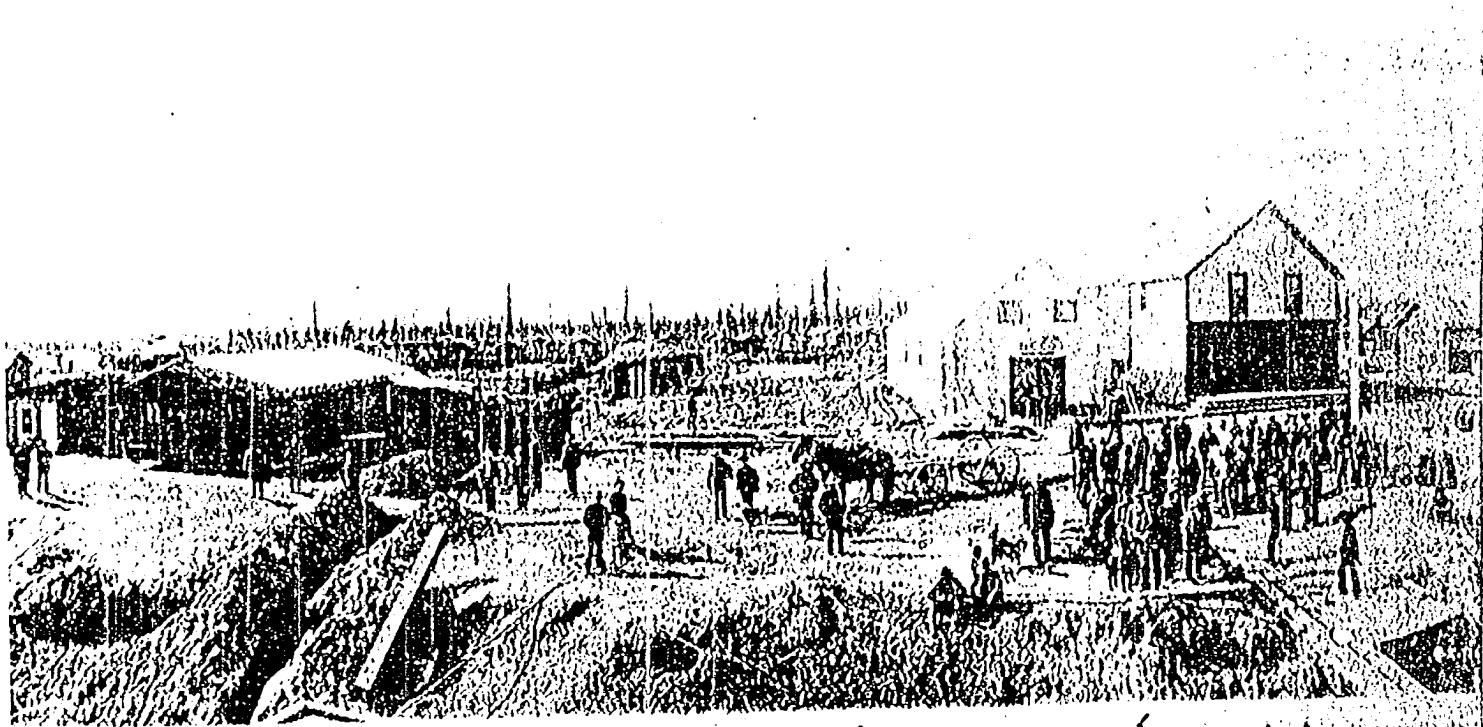
On a grander scale were the banks, three of them, with striped awnings over their plate glass windows. Upstairs were the offices of doctors, lawyers, dentists, assayers, and government officials, for Fairbanks was the seat of the Fourth Judicial District....⁶

An old prospector named Johnny Penovich described Fairbanks this way:

When I first saw Fairbanks in the fall of 1906, ...Second Avenue was a muddy trail. Most of First Avenue had been burned away

⁵ William Cashen, A Brief History of Fairbanks (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1972), 3-4.

⁶ Wold, This Old House, 24-25.



Fairbanks. June 1st 1904

PHOTO 1: Tent City, Fairbanks, Alaska - June 1, 1904. The Hulda Ford Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

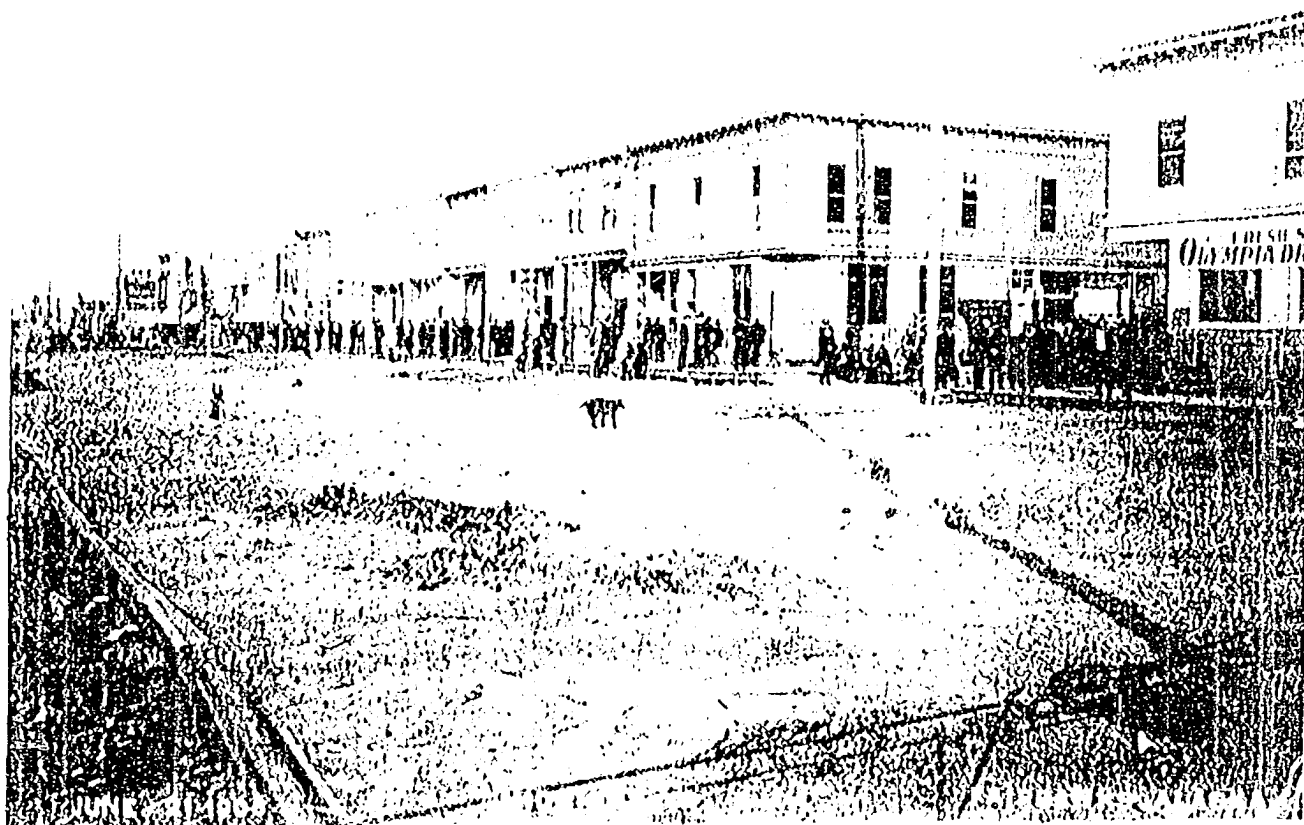


PHOTO 2: First Avenue in Downtown Fairbanks, Alaska June 21, 1906. The Dorothy Loftus Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elinor E. Rasmussen Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

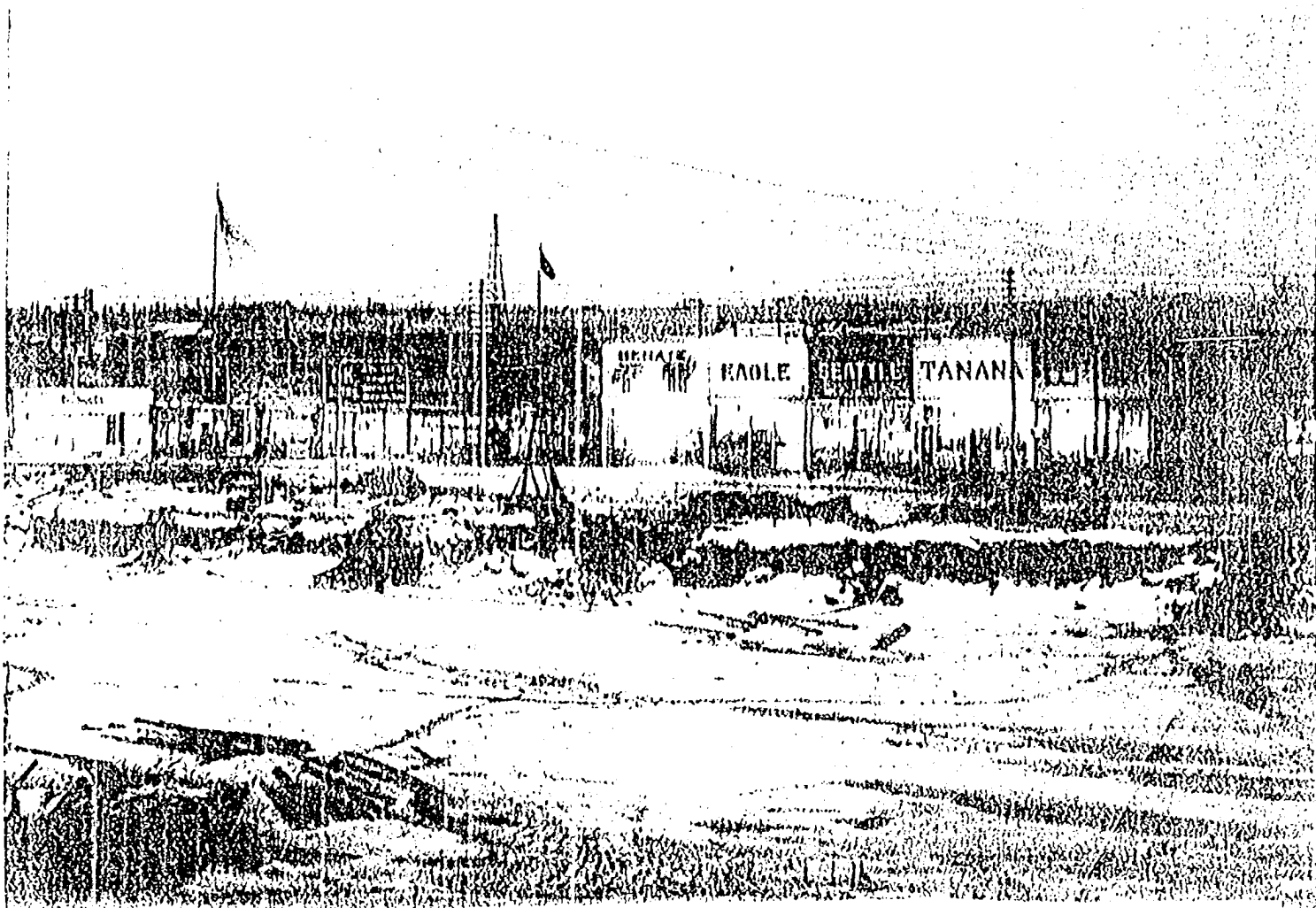


PHOTO 3: Second Avenue Night View in Downtown Fairbanks, Alaska - 1908. The Dorothy Loftus Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

by a fire earlier that year, but the Floradora Dance Hall was right there (pointing to a present Alaska Market Building), and operating full blast, with its dancing girls and gambling taking a good share of the miner's gold.⁷

The Northern Commercial Company, the largest store in town, became the economic stabilizer in the community in the early years. The NC Company, as it was known, was located on First Avenue next to the Chena River Wharf, and provided citizens in the area with supplies, as well as the comforts of home. For some people, economic stability took some time to accomplish. The NC Company provided credit to people with long repayment terms. The N.C. Company supplied Fairbanks with electricity from its power plant, hot water and steam heat from 1906 until the city purchased the utility in 1949.⁸

Many of the original stores are no longer standing in the core-area. The town experienced a major flood in 1905 and a devastating fire in 1906. On February 6, 1919, fire again destroyed most of the business district. Everything on Front Street (First Avenue) between Cushman and Lacey, was leveled along with the buildings on Cushman and Second.⁹

Although isolated, Fairbanks citizens did not lack social events. Fraternal organizations such as the Eagles, Moose, Pioneers of Alaska, and several Masonic orders

⁷ "Second Avenue Covered with Stumps in 1906," Fairbanks Jessen's Weekly, 17 July 1952. Lulu Fairbanks Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

⁸Robert L. Monahan, "The Development of Settlement in the Fairbanks Area, Alaska. A Study of Permanence" (Ph.D.diss., Department of Geography, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, 1959), 157-158.

⁹Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 29 November 1948.



SALOON AND DANCE HALL

The Racetrack Saloon and Dance Hall operated on Fourth Avenue near the east end of the "line."

—Photo courtesy Fabian Carev

PHOTO 4: Photo of Saloon and Dancehall Early Fairbanks, Alaska - 1905.
Pioneer All Alaska Weekly, February 2, 1973.

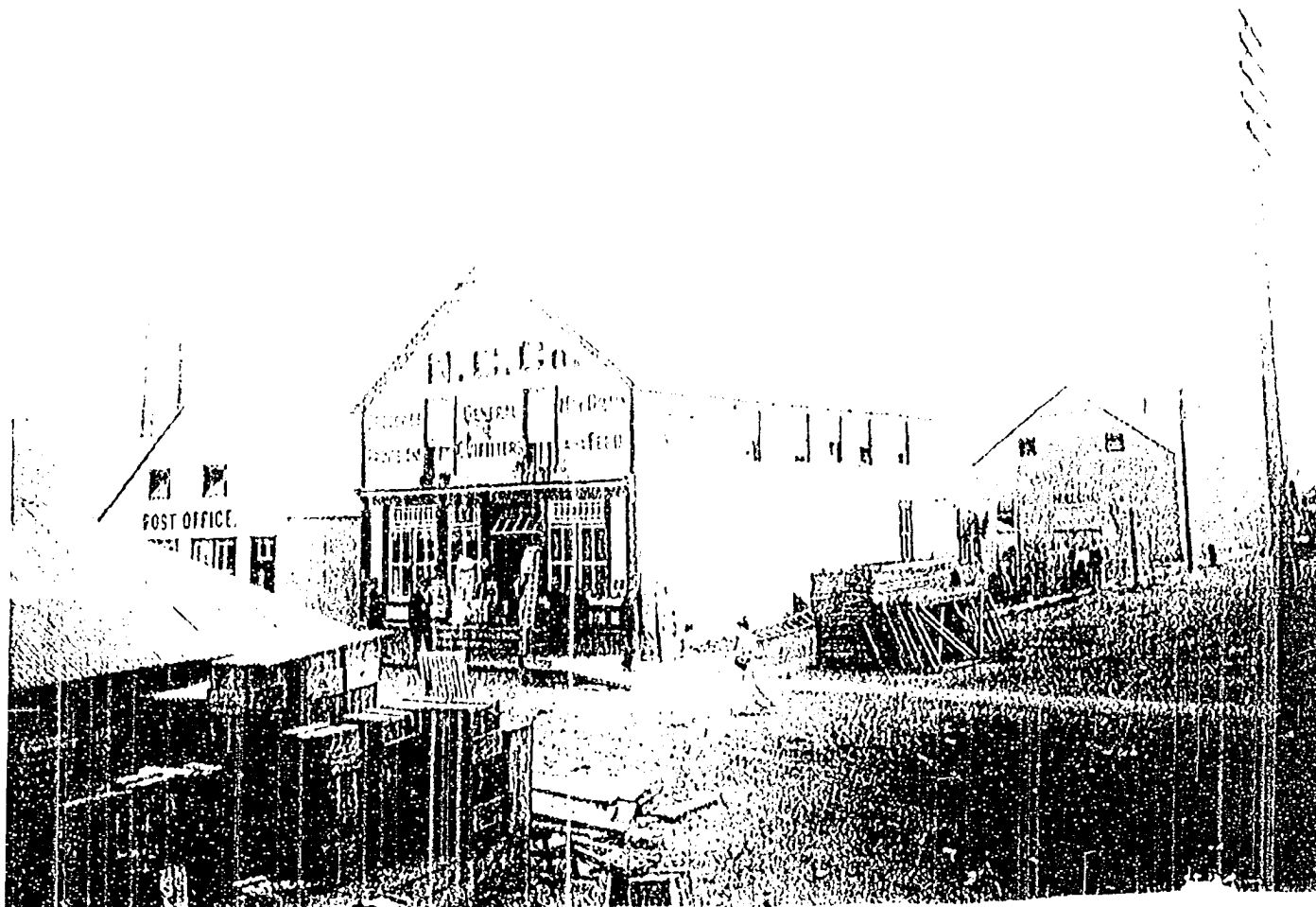


PHOTO 5: The Northern Commercial Company Store in Fairbanks, Alaska. Eiskine Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

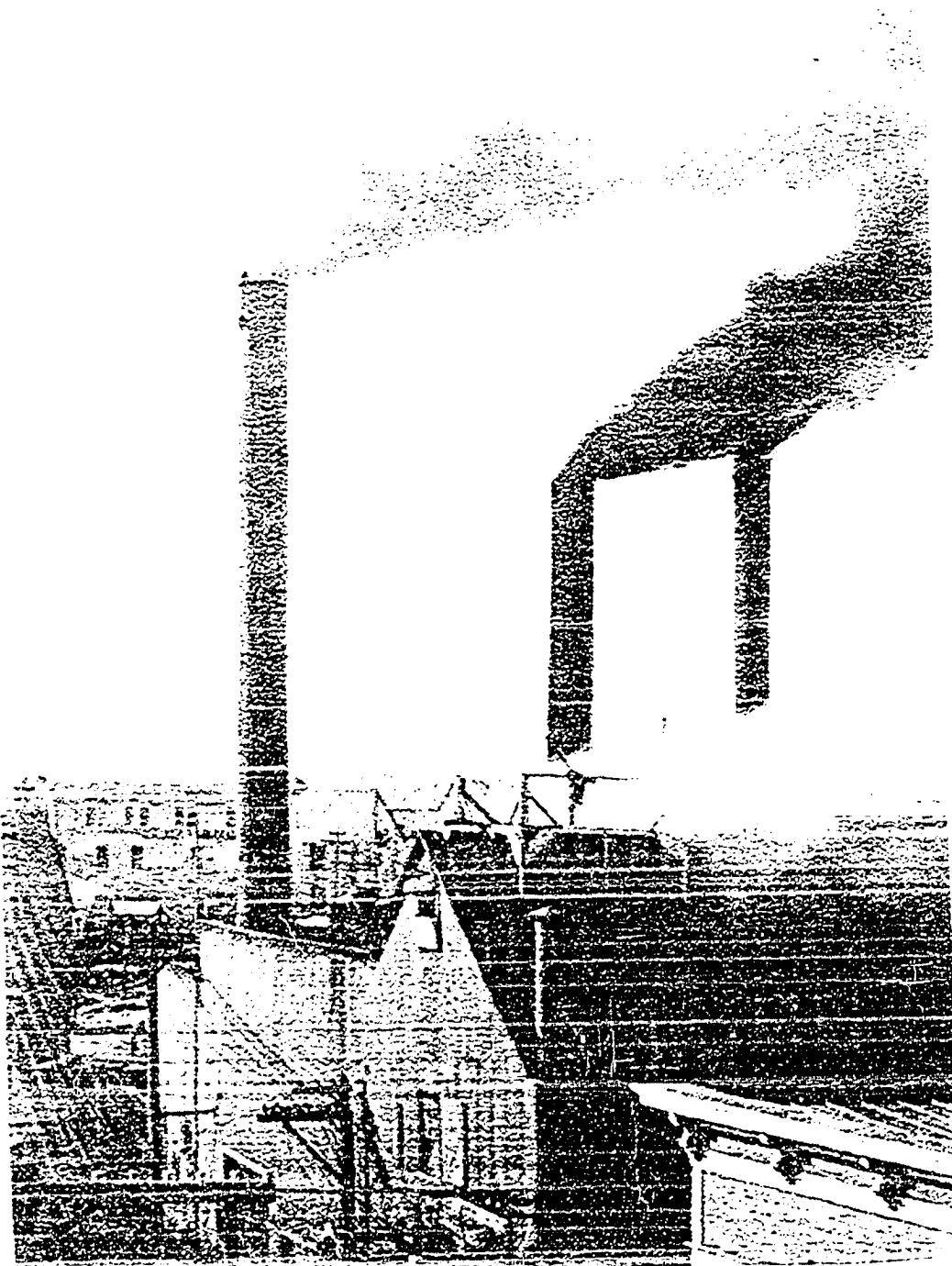


PHOTO 6: The Northern Commercial Company Power Plant in Fairbanks, Alaska. Dorothy Loftus Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer B. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

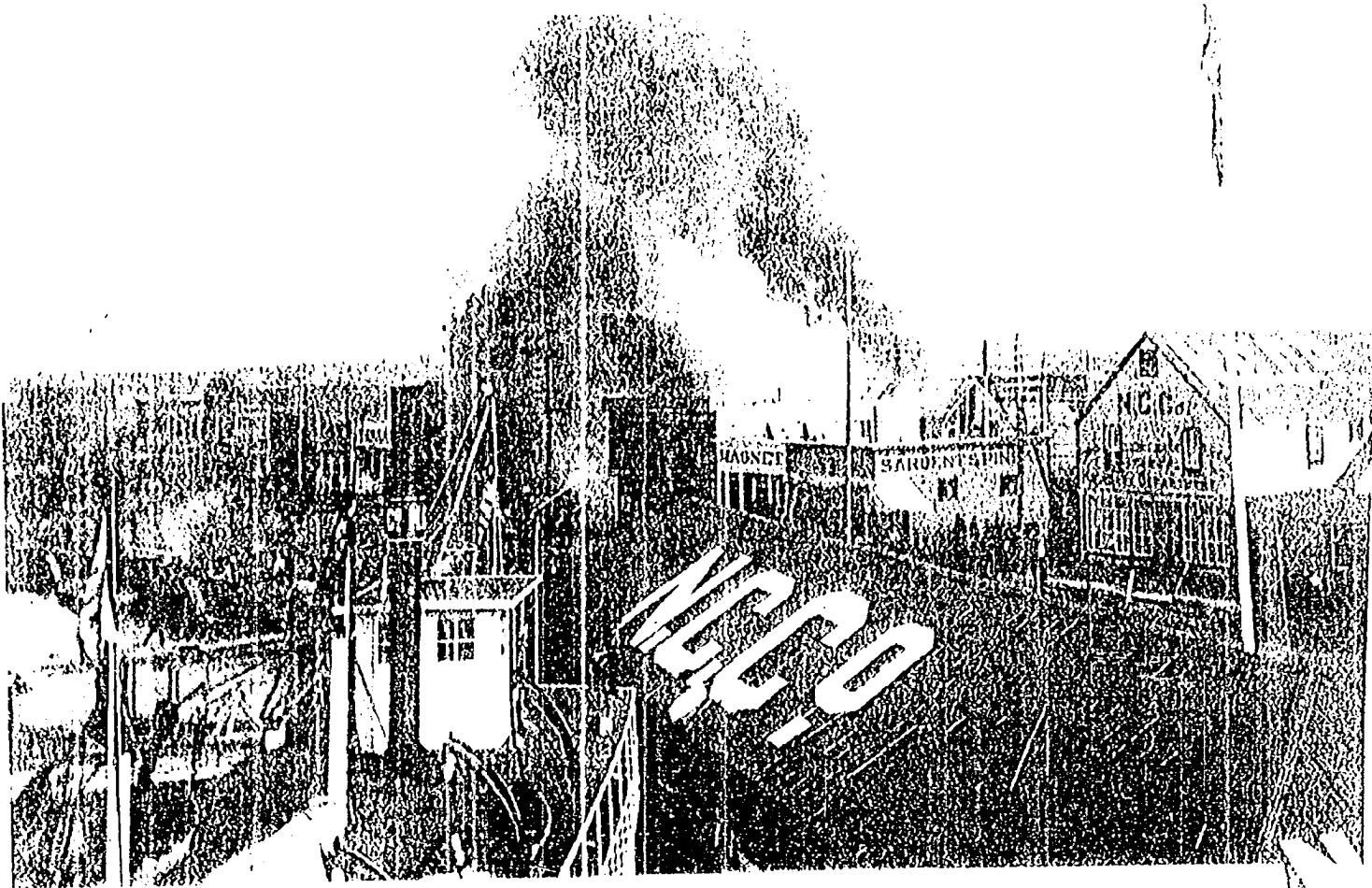


PHOTO 7: The Starting of the Great Fire in Fairbanks, Alaska - 1906. Albert Johnson Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks



PHOTO 8: Destruction of Fairbanks, Alaska, by Fire - 1906. Albert Johnson Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

provided many social gatherings for the community.¹⁰ Winter carnivals, parades and sporting events, theatrical performances, movies, and dances brought the people closer to the life they left behind in the lower 48.¹¹

Women filled in the social calendars and made plans for the beautiful flower gardens that blossomed in the summer. Garden parties, teas, and dances marked the various festivals throughout the year. All these activities took place in the core-area. Besides the organized social activities, one could also find gambling in the saloons and dance halls, prizefights, and more.¹²

The businessmen ran the town government, set the rules of conduct, and established regulations for the citizens to follow. Many of the early political figures were well-educated individuals, successful entrepreneurs, and family men.

The teen years of the little town brought despair to many as mining declined. Miners did not have the equipment necessary to break the frozen tundra, and they "played out" the surface mining. Although the equipment existed to make further mining feasible, it was too costly for most individuals to bring it to Fairbanks. As mining dwindled, the population began to decline. As described by W. F. Thompson:

The men who got rich in mining took or sent their money out of the country and followed it as soon as they had worked their richest ground out, patenting the ground and leaving it tax-free until the railroad and low-cost supplies would make it worth while to come back for more money....¹³

¹⁰ Cashen, 7.

¹¹ The Fairbanks Commercial Club, Descriptive of Fairbanks, Alaska's Golden Heart (Fairbanks: n.p. April 1916), 17.

¹² W.F. Thompson, "The Story of Fairbanks, The 'Heart of Alaska'," Fairbanks Daily News Miner Annual, July 1923, 7.

¹³ Thompson, 4.

In 1911, the owner of the Washington-Alaska Bank, Mr. E. T. Barnette, betrayed the city he helped create by swindling approximately \$500,000 and fleeing the state.¹⁴ The bank failed because a large Seattle bank refused to cover its overdraft of the Washington-Alaska Bank. The underlying cause of the bank failure had happened years before when E. T. Barnette sold stock from the Gold Bar Lumber Company, a company Barnette owned, to the bank at inflated prices. When the Washington-Alaska Bank was forced to liquidate its assets, the stock was greatly devalued. Barnette had resigned as president of the bank just prior to its collapse and had gone to Seattle when the bottom fell out.¹⁵

For Fairbanks to survive, new jobs needed to be created. The Alaska Railroad began building a railroad to the Nenana coal fields in 1914. In 1923, President Warren G. Harding marked completion of the railroad by driving a golden spike.¹⁶

In 1915, Congress established a land-grant college. After much fighting among Alaskan communities, Fairbanks was named as the new home for what is now known as the University of Alaska. To add to this positive influx, the Richardson Highway was constructed from Fairbanks to Valdez, giving the small town a new vein for economic blood.

Through the lean years, the citizens pulled together to keep the center of trade alive. In spite of the decreased population, the core-area continued to bustle with seven restaurants, seven doctors, two newspapers, twenty lawyers, numerous hotels and bath houses and even a bank, the First National Bank of Fairbanks.¹⁷ Fairbanks' citizens had access to many of the products found in stores across the nation. The grocery stores advertised specials on beef, pork, and lobster. Fashions from Paris still arrived in the

¹⁴ Cashen, 18.

¹⁵ Terrance Cole, Crooked Past. The History of a Frontier Mining Camp: Fairbanks, Alaska (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1991), 124-126.

¹⁶ Cashen, 9.

¹⁷ Ibid.



PHOTO 9: The Washington-Alaska Bank in Fairbanks, Alaska. V. E. Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

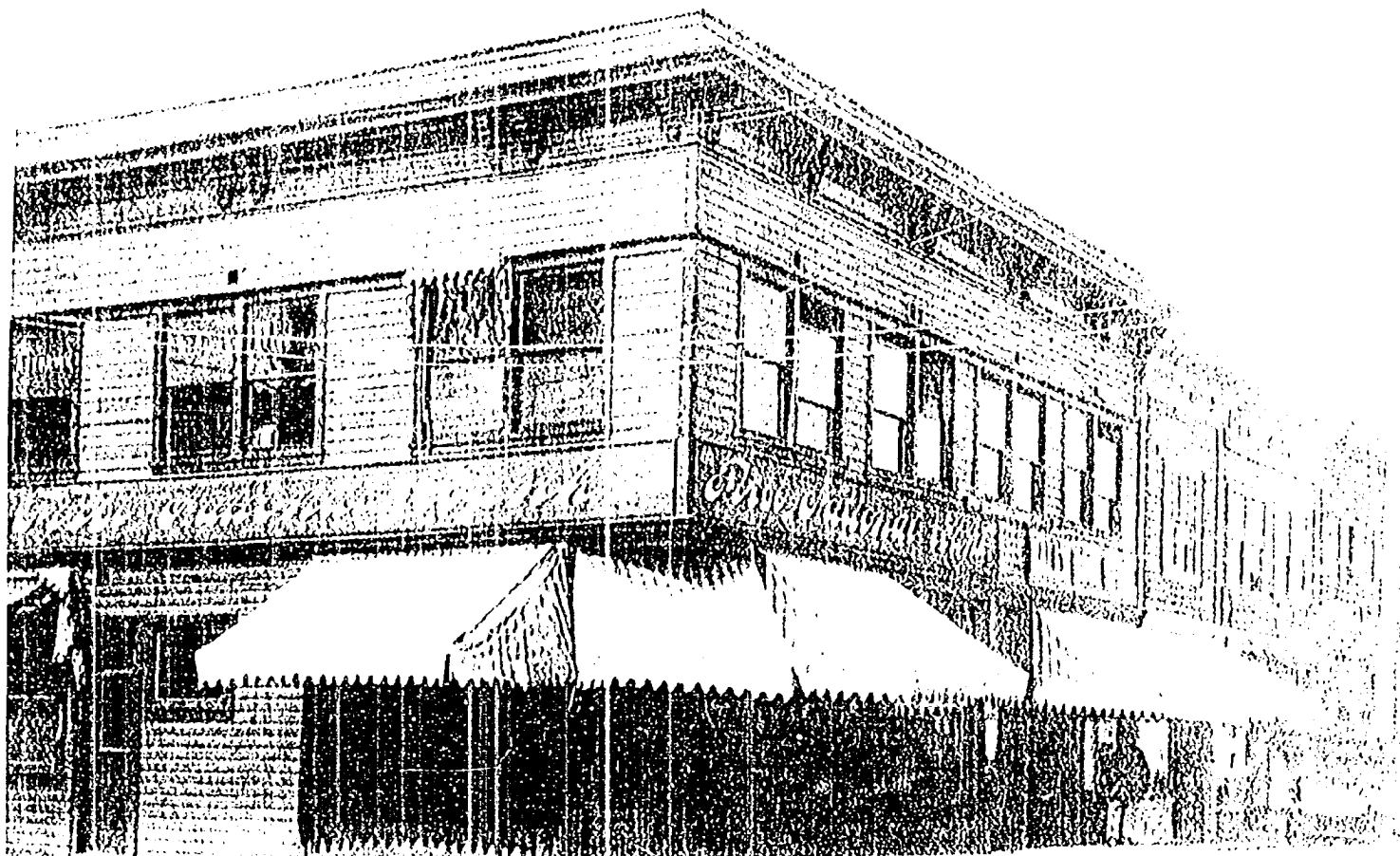


PHOTO 10: First National Bank in Fairbanks, Alaska. Albert Johnson Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

store-front windows of the various dress shops on Second Avenue. Clothes and food were not in short supply. However, machinery and tools were harder to get so people held on to what they had and found a multitude of purposes for scrap material. The practice of hoarding became a survival technique for some.

Within the limits of the core-area, a certain avenue was set aside for "night trading," the Fourth Avenue District. A large wooden fence separated the avenue from the rest of the core area. A wooden door allowed customers to enter. This section of the core-area was prostitution alley, or what is sometimes referred to as "the red light district" or "The Line."¹⁸ Although prostitution was not legal, it was an accepted practice in the early days of Fairbanks. Prostitutes gained a certain respect from the male citizens of the city. Besides the obvious business engagements, the "ladies" were also available to nurse sick miners back to health and to help those who had no money or those who just needed someone to "talk" to. As long as no trouble surfaced, prostitution survived along with the rest of the shops in the core area. The legal profession, such as judges and lawyers looked to prostitutes as a means of companionship for miners who came north.

During the mining years, there were many more men than women in Fairbanks. The prostitutes provided a valuable service to the community. Father William Warren described "The Line" to Lael Morgan in this way, "Archdeacon Stuck started the Line in Fairbanks because he felt compassion, not for the girls but for the young miners whom they and their pimps were mugging and rolling at an astonishing rate."¹⁹

Chuck Hebert concurred with the findings of Father Warren and gave this account to Lael Morgan, "Many were well-respected prostitutes, who contributed significantly to

¹⁸ Janet Matheson, A City Historic Survey 1985 (Fairbanks: City of Fairbanks, 1985), 27.

¹⁹ Lael Morgan. "Whores of Yore: The Unnamed Pioneers," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Alaska Historical Society, Fairbanks, 7-9 October 1993, 150. Information quoted was verified in writing by both Father Warren and Chuck Hebert during interviews with Lael Morgan. The original diary of Archbishop Stuck was destroyed. However, Chuck Hebert and Father Warren stated that they read the diary and that the information provided to Lael Morgan came from that original source.

their frontier communities, staking miners and routinely taking up collections for those in trouble; actually serving as an early day United Way."²⁰

The Fourth Avenue Line, with the approval of the city council, was "tolerated" by Judge James Wickersham who presided over the Fairbanks' federal district court from 1903 to approximately 1907. The ladies operated within strict rules and were prohibited from participating in the social affairs of a polite society.²¹ Clara Rust, in 1907, described Fourth Avenue this way, "At Fourth (Avenue), there was a 10-foot-high braced fence creating, oddly, a walled compound. A gate in the fence was just wide enough to admit wagon deliveries which was obstructed with a blind wall so people could not see inside."²²

Prostitution alley remained until urban renewal projects swept away the remnants of the trade in the early 1950s.²³ Although the houses were torn down, the business, of course, survived.

Native issues were addressed in Fairbanks for the first time during the teen years. A meeting with Judge Wickersham, federal officials and natives revolved around the matter of improving conditions among natives. During the meeting, the issues of health care, education, and employment were discussed. The chiefs wanted their villages to be included in the economic growth of the area. They asked that natives be included in the work force for the Alaska Railroad and also asked for the chance to bid on fish and wood contracts.²⁴ Soon, the Alaska Railroad employed natives and built "Eskimo Village," a housing project for native employees of the railroad. However, the native presence in Fairbanks had little impact on the community as a whole.

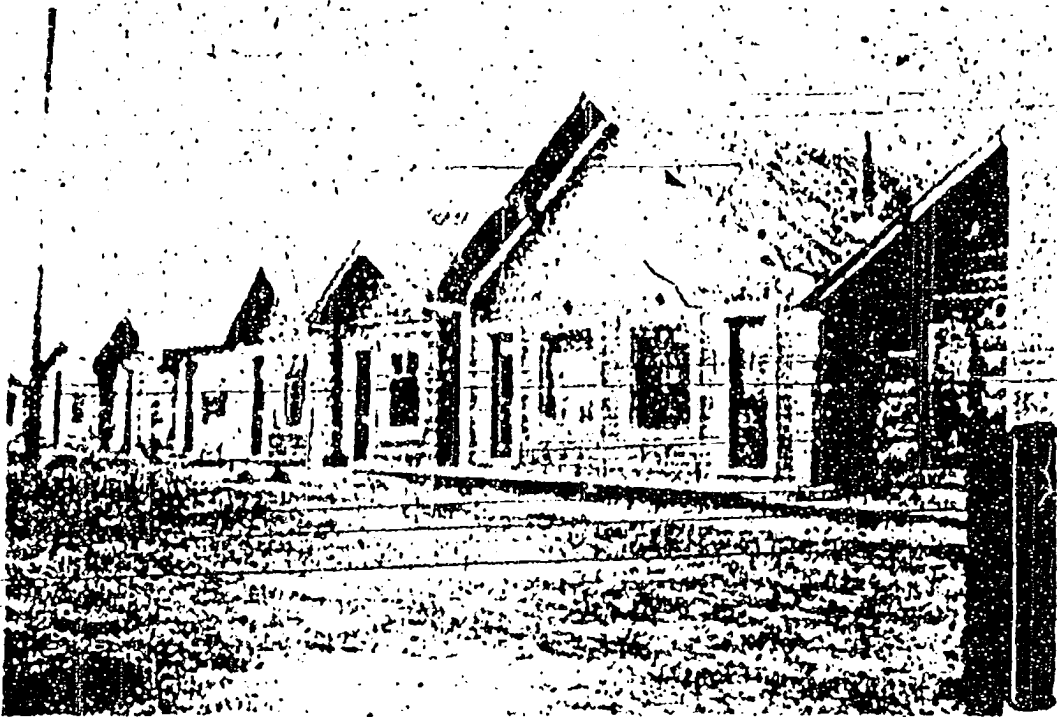
²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Jon Nielson, "Sourdough Sirens and Cheechako Chippies-Alaska's Other Gold Rush," Alaska Today 9 (1981-82): 17.

²² Wold, This Old House, 24-25.

²³ Monahan, 167.

²⁴ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 17 July 1915.



4th AVENUE LINE

The above photo was taken in the spring of 1905 in Fairbanks.

—Photo courtesy Fabian Carev

PHOTO 11: Fourth Avenue "Line" in Fairbanks, Alaska. Pioneer All Alaska Weekly - February 2, 1973.



EARLY DAY LADIES

~~The above photo, taken in 1905, showed some of the women who lived on the 4th Avenue "line."~~
~~Left to right were Betty, Sophie, Texas Rose and Gussie. Most of them arrived in the Klondike~~
PHOTO 12: Early Day Ladies of Fairbanks, Alaska. Pioneer All Alaska Weekly - February 2, 1973.

Although the Depression brought a halt to the Roaring 20s in the rest of the country, Alaska became the spark of hope for many and Fairbanks became a city of opportunity where families could get a new start. From 1920 through 1939, Fairbanks experienced an incredible economic boost. Second Avenue and the core area began to make the transition from wooden store fronts to modern cement multi-story structures.

The United States Smelting and Refining Company brought in the needed machinery and technology to dig for gold through the frozen tundra in 1923.²⁵ By 1933, gold prices rose to \$35 an ounce and mining became the leading industry in Fairbanks. Because money was now flowed again, new buildings appeared to change the landscape of Second Avenue and the core area.

The Empress Theater, built on the Second Avenue in 1927, became the first solid cement structure in town. This theater was the center of culture for the city as concerts and movies became popular entertainment.²⁶ A beautiful new Nordale Hotel was reconstructed on Second Avenue after the first hotel burned down on First Avenue in 1923. The Nordale Hotel was the showpiece of Second Avenue and remained a popular rest area among visitors and members of the business community. Map #1, a copy of a 1927 Sanborn Insurance map of the city, shows this area. This map is located in the map pocket.

Planes were introduced to Fairbanks during the 1920s, and Fairbanks began its love affair with aircraft. Cargo carrier businesses, passenger service to the bush communities, and air service to Seattle made Fairbanks an attractive relocation community. Pan American Airways began service from Fairbanks to the lower 48 state destinations, and Wien Air Alaska provided air passenger and freight service to the bush communities. Rickert Field, south of Gaffney Road, was used during the latter part of the 1920s as a commercial airstrip and was replaced by Weeks Field by 1930. See Map #2 Rickert Field.

²⁵ Cashen, 6.

²⁶ Matheson, 26.

Many of the airline offices were located on the 500 block of Second Avenue and in the Nordale Hotel. Fairbanks became a strong trade center because there were alternate routes to the interior city. The railroad, the overland routes, and the riverboat, as well as aircraft now existed.

The population of Fairbanks increased steadily into the 1930s. William Cashen wrote, "In 1922, the population was about 1200....In 1926, the town had a population of 1723. By 1935, the town's population had grown to 2778."²⁷

Austin "Cap" Lathrop, a Fairbanks millionaire, invested his earnings in the core area when he built the Lathrop Building in the 500 block of Second Avenue in the 1930s. One of the few concrete buildings in the core area, this structure housed both business offices and apartments. Lathrop later added a local radio station and a theater.²⁸

A new Federal Building was erected at the corner of Second Avenue and Cushman Street, and the First National Bank renovated its building directly across from the Federal Building. Second Avenue and the core area continued to develop at a moderate pace.

Throughout the 1930s, the core area remained the focal point for business and social events. As the town prospered, so did the business district. "White" society still dominated the political scene.

By the end of the 1930s, Fairbanks had begun to change from a mining town to a construction town. In 1939, the military began construction of Ladd Army Base. As the city began its outward development, the core area attempted to make the necessary adjustments to accommodate its patrons. The 1940s were a time of war, and the following chapter will explore the changing society.

²⁷ Cashen, 58.

²⁸ Monahan, 158.

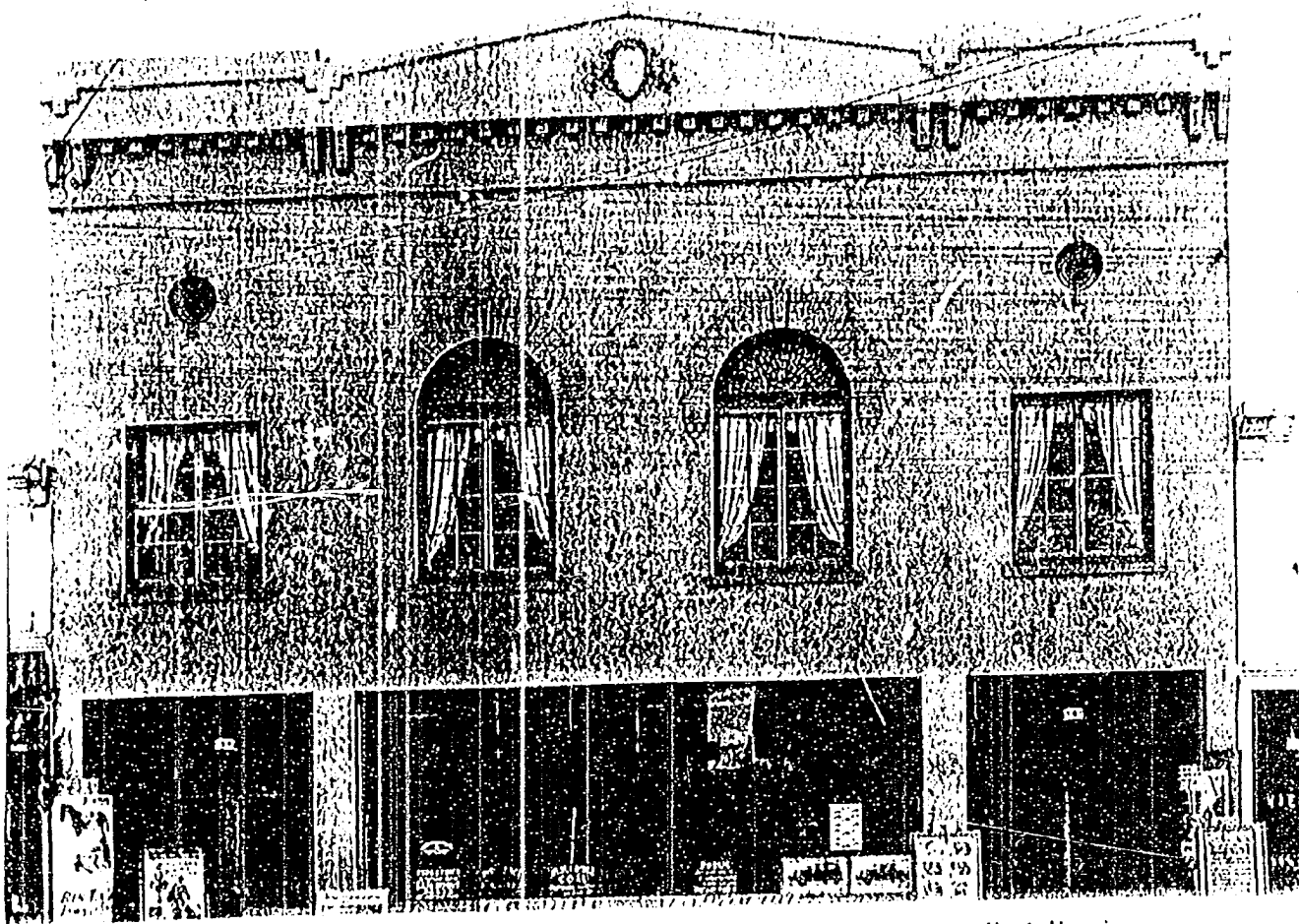


PHOTO 13: The Empress Theater in Fairbanks, Alaska. Charles E. Bunnell Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

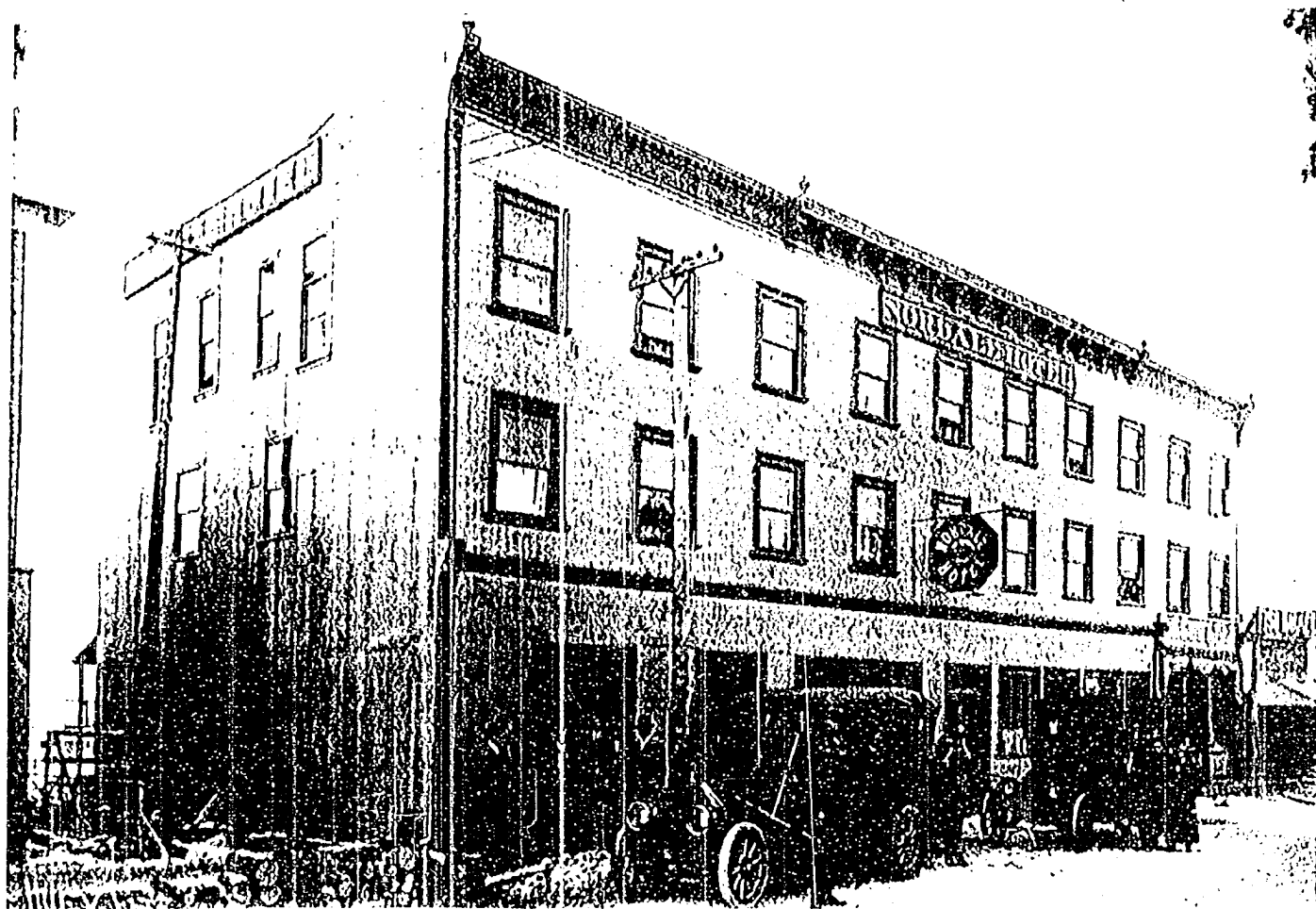
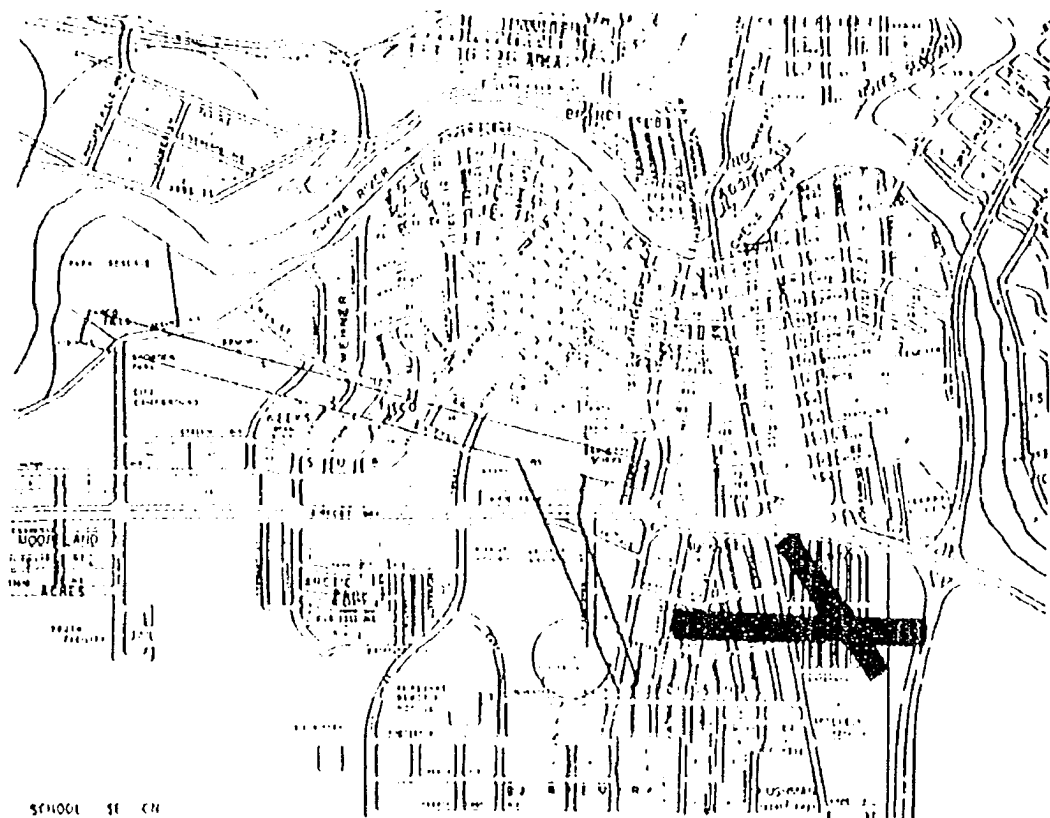


PHOTO 14: The Nordale Hotel on First Avenue in Fairbanks, Alaska. V. E. Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.



MAP 2: Rickert Field Map, Fairbanks, Alaska - 1925 to 1930.
Interior and Arctic Aeronautical Foundation.

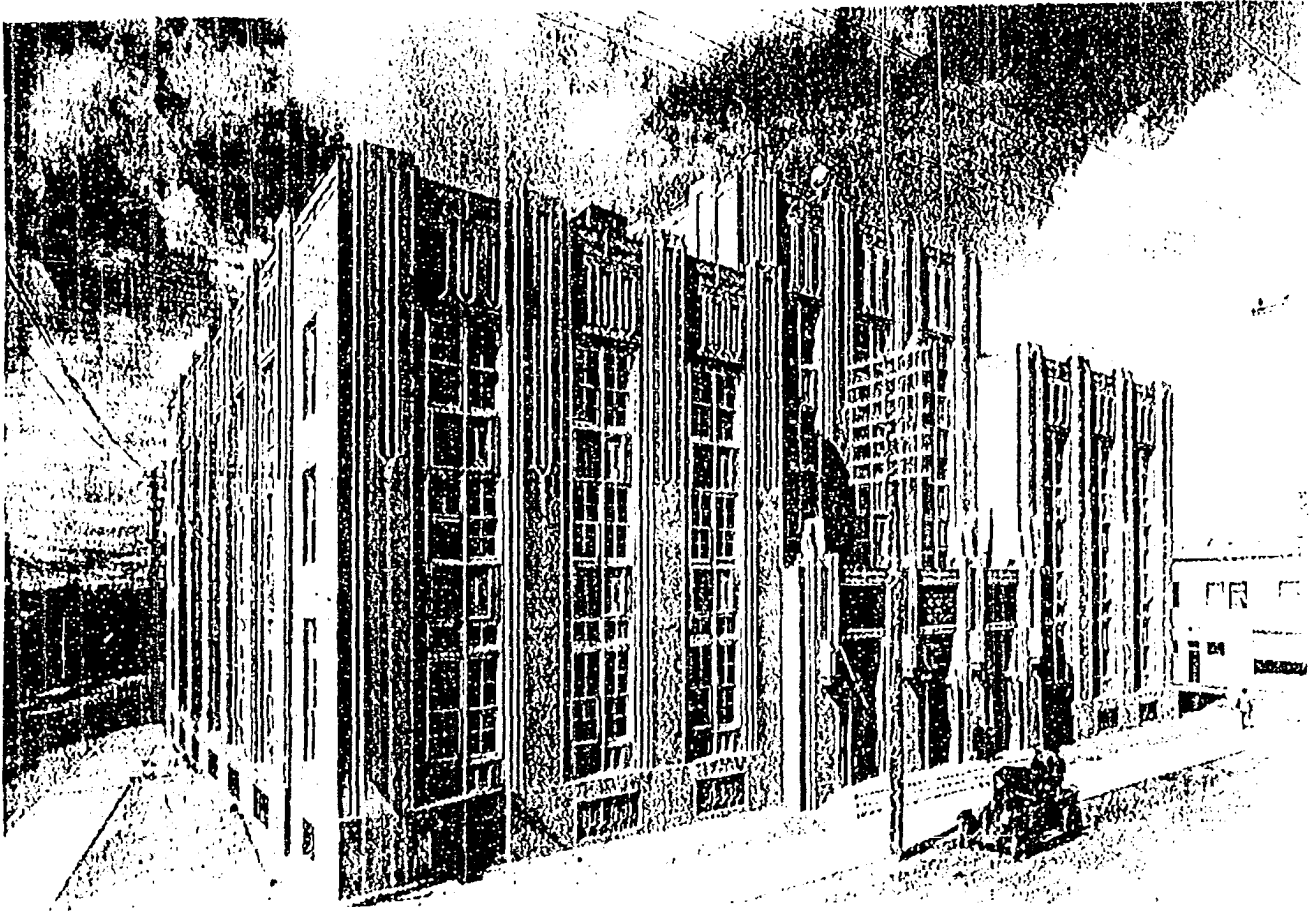


PHOTO 15: Federal Building in Fairbanks, Alaska. Charles E. Bunnell Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

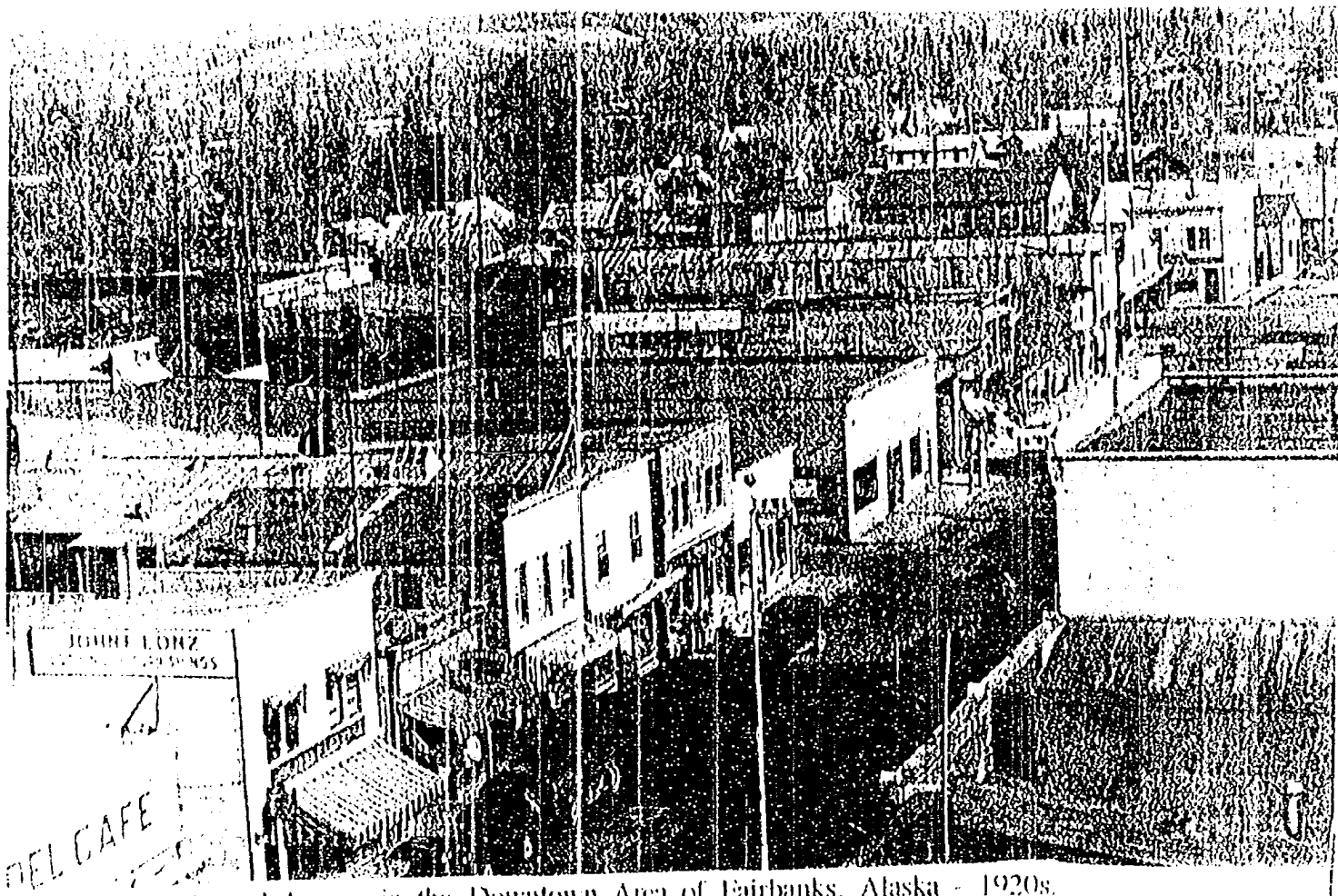


PHOTO 16: Second Avenue in the Downtown Area of Fairbanks, Alaska - 1920s.
Reuel Giffin Collection. Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson
Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks

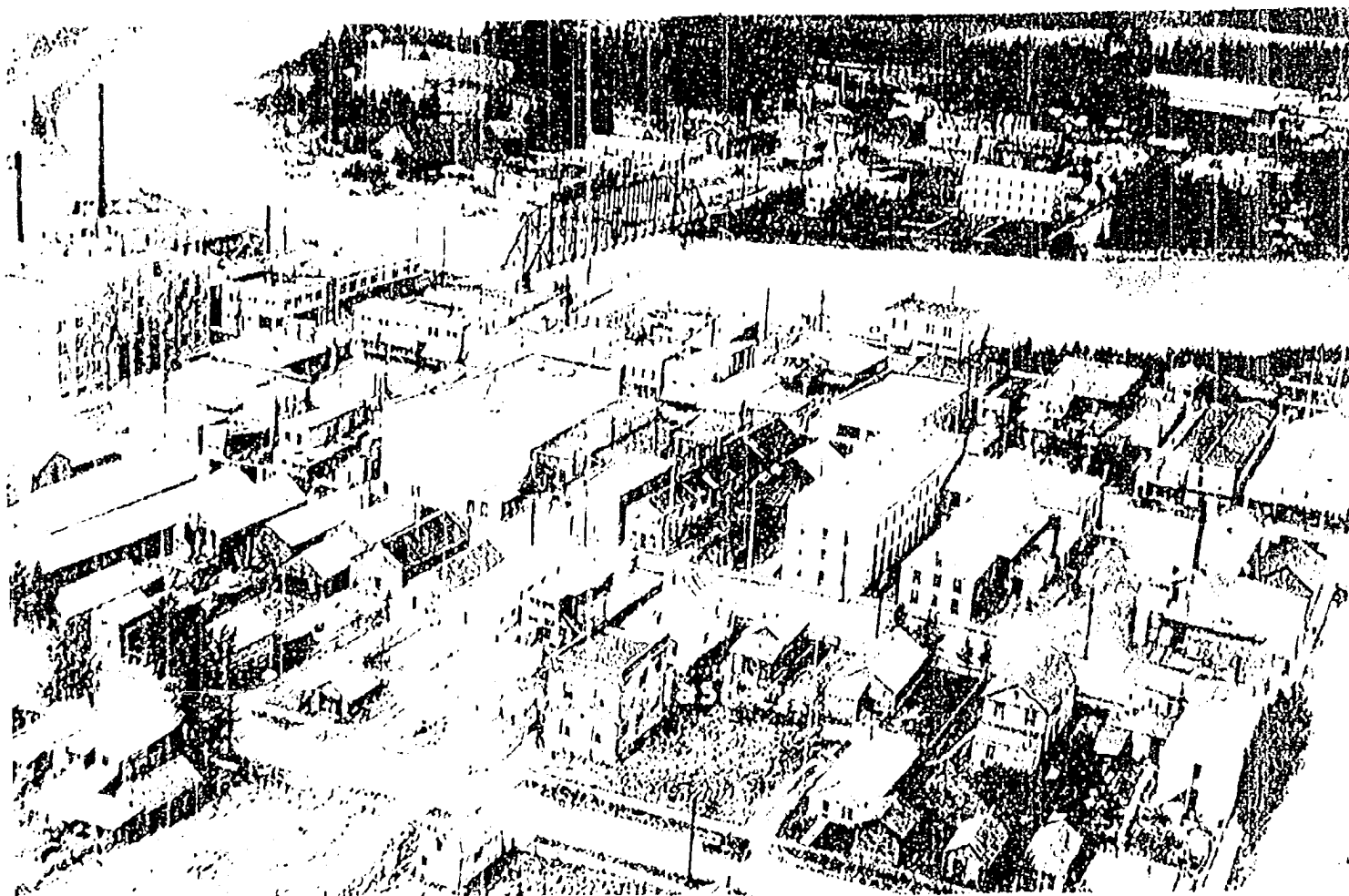


PHOTO 17: Aerial View of the Downtown Area in Fairbanks, Alaska - 1930s. Reuel Griffin Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The War Years of the 1940s

During the 1940s, Fairbanks began its expansion northward across the Chena River. World War II gave Fairbanks a boost as military bases and air fields were developed in order to accommodate bombers and fighter planes.²⁹ World War II changed the economic structure of Fairbanks from a mineral-based economy to a construction-based economy, with the United States government as the principal employer in the Interior.

Government offices were located in the core-area. The Territorial Tax Department was located on the 400 block of Second Avenue, the Housing and Information Bureau was located at the Nordale Hotel, and the Rent Control Office could be found at 548 Second Avenue, along with the Fish and Wildlife Office. The Selective Service Office was in the 500 block of Third Avenue, and the Department of Public Welfare was at 611 Third Avenue. The Department of Agriculture was housed at 514 Fourth Avenue, and the Territorial Employment Service was located at 601 Fourth Avenue. City Hall was located at the corner of Fifth and Cushman.

As you examine the Sanborn Map (Map #3 is located in the map pocket) of the 1940s era, you can see how compact the core area appeared. The 400 block of First and Second Avenues contained the Northern Commercial complex, their general store and the power and water plant. The Court House and jail were found on the 200 block of Cushman Street.

As Fairbanks expanded, the privately owned utilities could not keep up with the fast pace of the population expansion during the war period. The population increased from 2,101 in 1929 to 3,455 by 1939, as shown in Table 5 on page 75. The city government was the only entity that could possibly afford to upgrade those systems, and as a result, the city government purchased the utilities from the Northern Commercial Company in 1949 and leased the telephone system from the Fairbanks Telephone Company.³⁰

²⁹ Cooley, 6.

³⁰ Cooley, 32.

The government provided a large number of the employment opportunities in the city. Approximately 150 persons were employed in city departments and the municipal utilities. Many citizens worked for the federal government in various areas, such as the post office, civilian jobs on the bases, and military construction. The University of Alaska was the second largest employer providing approximately 1000 jobs to Fairbanksans.³¹

In the private sector, in addition to the Northern Commercial Company, the First National Bank, a cigar store, and several drug stores could be found on the 100 block of Cushman Street. Third Avenue and Cushman Street was the location for the Fairbanks Bath House, an establishment where families could take baths on a Friday night. However, during the rest of the week it was reserved for men only.

The 500 Block of Second Avenue represented the heart of the core area. As you walked toward Lacey Street, you passed jewelry stores, restaurants, and grocery stores. Alaska National Bank was located at Second and Lacey, a block away from its competitor, First National Bank at Second and Cushman Streets. You could find everything you needed in the core-area, from hardware to furs, beauty salons and barber shops, department stores and grocery stores, and theaters and radio stations, bars and liquor stores.

The Nordale Hotel, at 511 Second Avenue, was the hospitality center of Fairbanks thanks to a woman named Eva McGown. Eva lived at the Nordale Hotel after her husband, Arthur, died in the 1930s, and greeted many weary travelers there. During World War II, the city paid her to be "a housing and employment agent."³² Eva's job was to help people find housing, greet dignitaries at the airport, and comfort individuals who found living in Fairbanks to be difficult. Mrs. McGown performed her task in exemplary fashion and was named "honorary hostess of the Territory by the governor."³³ The Nordale Hotel was "the place to stay" when coming to Fairbanks, in part because of the gracious hospitality of Eva McGown, the official hostess of Fairbanks.

³¹ Cashen, 15.

³² Wold, The Way It Was: of People, Places, and Things in Pioneer Interior Alaska (Anchorage: Alaska Northwest Publishing Co., 1988), 30.

³³ Wold, The Way It Was, 32.



PHOTO 18: Nordale Hotel on Second Avenue in Fairbanks, Alaska. Reuel Griffin Collection. Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

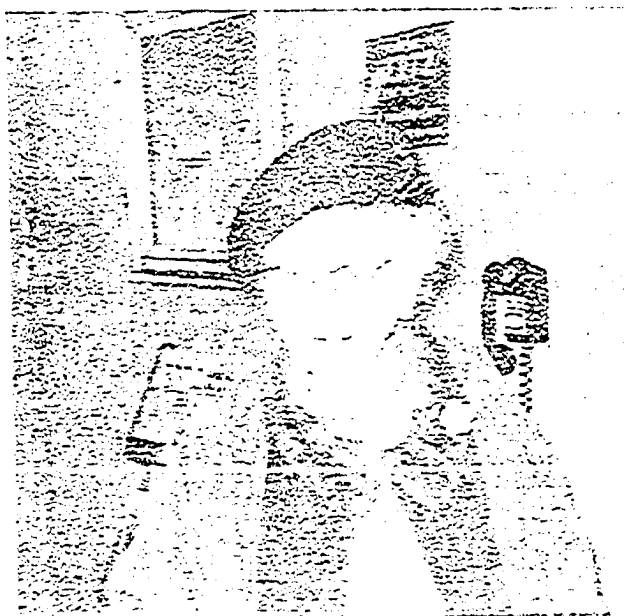


PHOTO 19: Eva McGown. Harrie Hughes Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

In contrast to Eva, another social figure also gained popularity in the core area. Edith Neile, known as "the Oregon Mare," made her money on "the Line," running a bath house on the outskirts of Fourth Avenue.³⁴ Edith was a dance hall girl from the Klondike era who came to Fairbanks to continue her "night trade." She ran the Cushman Street Bath House at 310 Cushman, now the site of Woolworths, and sold the bath house to Gertrude Crosman in the early 1940s. After selling her establishment, she worked at the Fairbanks Laundry and lived at the Nordale Hotel on the same floor as Eva McGown.³⁵ Edith was known for her generosity in helping "the down and out" and nursing the sick back to health. She died in Seattle in the 1960s in a nursing home after a long illness, alone and penniless.

Prostitution was a protected business in the 1940s. Although prostitution was illegal, the Chief of Police, George Norton, signed a document outlining the rules of conduct for ladies working the line. (See Appendix A). In exchange for obtaining permission to work "the Line," the ladies were to report to the police between the 1st and 10th of each month, at which time they would be charged with vagrancy and assessed a fine of \$50.00 payable to the Police Department.³⁶ For this fine, the ladies could work and not be threatened by law enforcement officers.

Kazis Krauczunas, an inspector-at-large for the Immigration Service, complained that, "the entire population (including the police force) leans toward protecting the prostitutes....the majority of the permanent residents knew the prostitutes by their first and second names...even the school children knew the prostitutes [sic] names and reputations."³⁷

³⁴ Ian D. Matheson to Pierre Berton, 4 November 1984, Edith Neile (Oregon Mare) Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

³⁵ Gertrude Crosman to Ian D. Matheson, 10 July 1983, Edith Neile (Oregon Mare) Collection.

³⁶ [George N. Norton], Fairbanks Police Department, 16 May 1945, Alaska Historical Collection, Alaska State Library, Juneau, Alaska.

³⁷ Morgan, 149.

According to Gertrude Crosman, prostitutes had to be examined by a physician every two weeks. They came to the bath house to wash before their visits.³⁸

Many of the men who controlled government and business in Fairbanks bore names still recognized today in Fairbanks. These families represented the building blocks of the Fairbanks economy and social structure. The Alaska Insurance Company, located in the Nordale Hotel, was established by John Butrovich in 1936. He served as city councilman and utilities board member, and later became a Territorial Senator in 1945.³⁹

Another family, the Stroeckers, made a name in the area of banking. The First National Bank was founded by Edward F. Stroecker in 1929. Ed Stroecker was appointed to the Charter Commission for the City of Fairbanks. According to Mr. Harry Shikora, "Ed Stroecker and Bailey controlled the money in this town. Stroecker ran First National Bank at the corner of Second and Cushman and Bailey ran Alaska National Bank at the corner of Second and Lacey Street."⁴⁰

Mr. Shikora described an incident where he went to Mr. Stroecker for a business loan to expand his business to include chemical gases. When Mr. Shikora met with Mr. Stroecker, Mr. Stroecker pointed to a piece of jewelry and told Mr. Shikora that the jewelry was given to him by the bank customer who just happened to own the chemical gas company that Mr. Shikora was about to compete against. Mr. Shikora acknowledged the jewelry and left the bank, knowing that the loan was denied, and went to Bailey's bank down the street.⁴¹

³⁸ Crosman to Matheson, 13 January 1984, Edith Neile (Oregon Mare) Collection.

³⁹ Clans M. Naske and Ludwig J. Rowinski, Fairbanks. A Pictorial History (Norfolk: Donning Company, Publishers, 1981), 135.

⁴⁰ Harry Shikora, interview by author, Anchorage, Alaska, 15 January 1996.

⁴¹ Harry Shikora, interview.



PHOTO 20: Second and Cushman in Fairbanks, Alaska. John Ryerson Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Chuck West started a small business, the Arctic Travel Service, on Second Avenue in the 1940s. This company grew to become a major tourism enterprise known across the continent as Westours, Inc.⁴²

The Lavery family owned a grocery, liquor store, and wholesale meat market at the corner of Second and Cushman. Although R. K. Lavery was never involved in the political arena, he provided much needed help to the residents of the city. His accounting ledgers reflected instances when credit was extended to families for substantial periods of time. Lavery's store also delivered groceries to residents three times a day.⁴³

Waechter Brothers Meat Market at 301 Cushman Street was "a friendly meat market where young customers, picking up orders for their mothers, were given free dill pickles from the barrel. Soup bones were for the asking; so was liver for the cat."⁴⁴

The core area was the business district of Fairbanks and the Interior and the core-area was the only place to go in order to get food, clothing, temporary shelter, or long-term apartment living. According to Harry Shikora, the core area was popular because that is all there was. Transportation routes also originated in the core in the forms of a bus terminal, cab offices, airline offices, and car dealers.

Besides the economic importance of the core-area, there was also the social aspect of Second Avenue. Dale Webb, a long time Fairbanksan who arrived here in the 1940s, stated that "most of the social events were found downtown." In the winter, the city hosted the Winter Carnival, and people from "bush" communities would come to town to join in the festivities.⁴⁵ The Chena River, near the Cushman Street Bridge, was the site for many winter sporting events during carnival time, when a king and queen were always chosen.

⁴² Naske and Rowinski, 135.

⁴³ Lavery Market Ledgers, Lavery Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

⁴⁴ Wold. The Way It Was, 34.

⁴⁵ Dale Webb, interview by author, Fairbanks, Alaska, 18 February 1995.

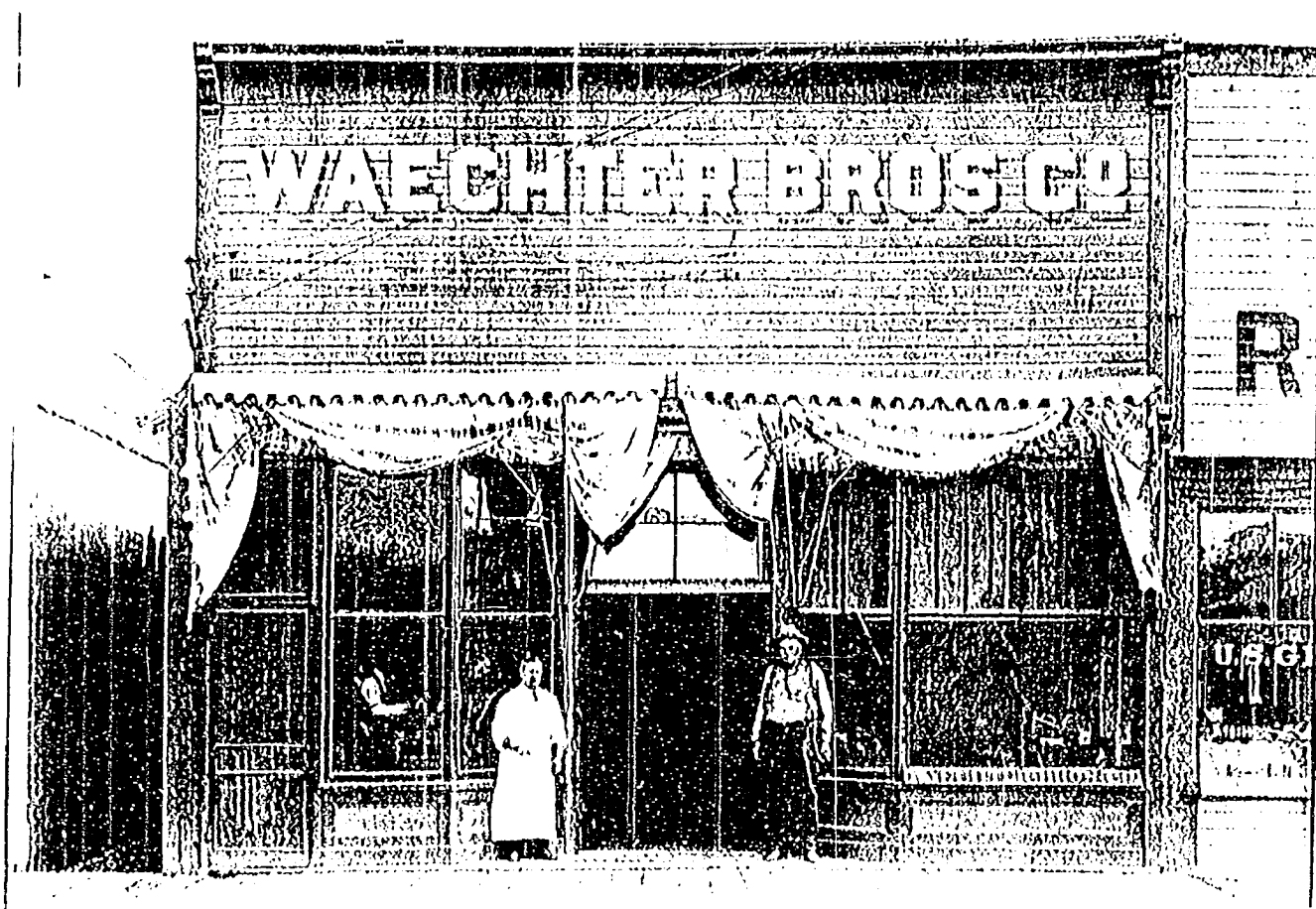


PHOTO 24: Waechter Brothers Meat Market in Fairbanks, Alaska. V. E. Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The Eagles' Hall hosted many dances throughout the year and in the summer there were beautiful flower gardens along First Avenue and around the city proper. Of course, the city had its community garden for those who wanted to plant their own vegetables. The Model Cafe, on the 500 block of Second Avenue, was a popular family restaurant and a place where various types of receptions were often held.

The saloons (bars) along First and Second Avenues did not create much of a problem because laws were enforced to protect the citizens from the drunks. According to Bob Nearing, those found drunk in public were taken to jail immediately. The "rowdy" bars were on the south side of town, so the core-area remained a "safe" area to be.⁴⁶ The bars in the core-area were looked upon as social gathering places where businessmen would talk about financial matters over a beer. Hugh Connelly described after-hours meetings where the town lawyers would gather at the Mecca Bar to discuss matters of the day. New lawyers who practiced in town were taken to the Mecca Bar for the "official welcome:" that is, all the attorneys present would have a drink, and the new lawyer paid the tab.⁴⁷

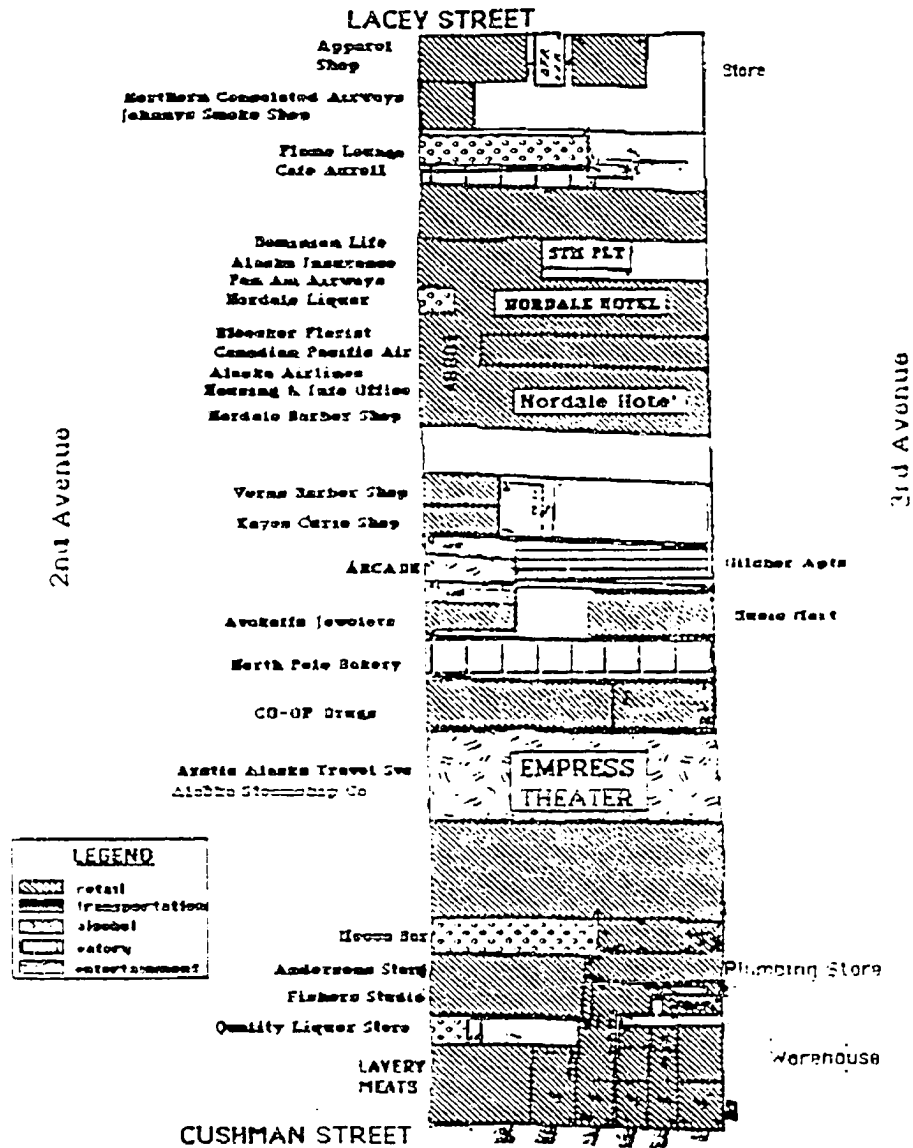
Tommy's Elbow Room opened in 1946 under the guidance of Tommy Paskvan. This lounge was the meeting place for many pilots who stayed over night in Fairbanks. It was also a popular spot for college students, employees of the Second Avenue businesses who would stop by after work, Lacey Street Theater patrons, and the various athletic teams that Tommy Paskvan sponsored.⁴⁸ Many bars could be found on Second Avenue as evidenced by Map #4 and Map #5.

As Fairbanks grew, the core area strained to keep up. Just a few of the many issues that faced the Central Business District were poor parking, dusty roads, and substandard buildings which fueled many fires. The core-area represented a partnership of business and government which served the entire community, and the people of Fairbanks supported the core area businesses, and worked together to improve Second Avenue. As Harry Shikora stated in his interview, "Everyone worked for the betterment of all the

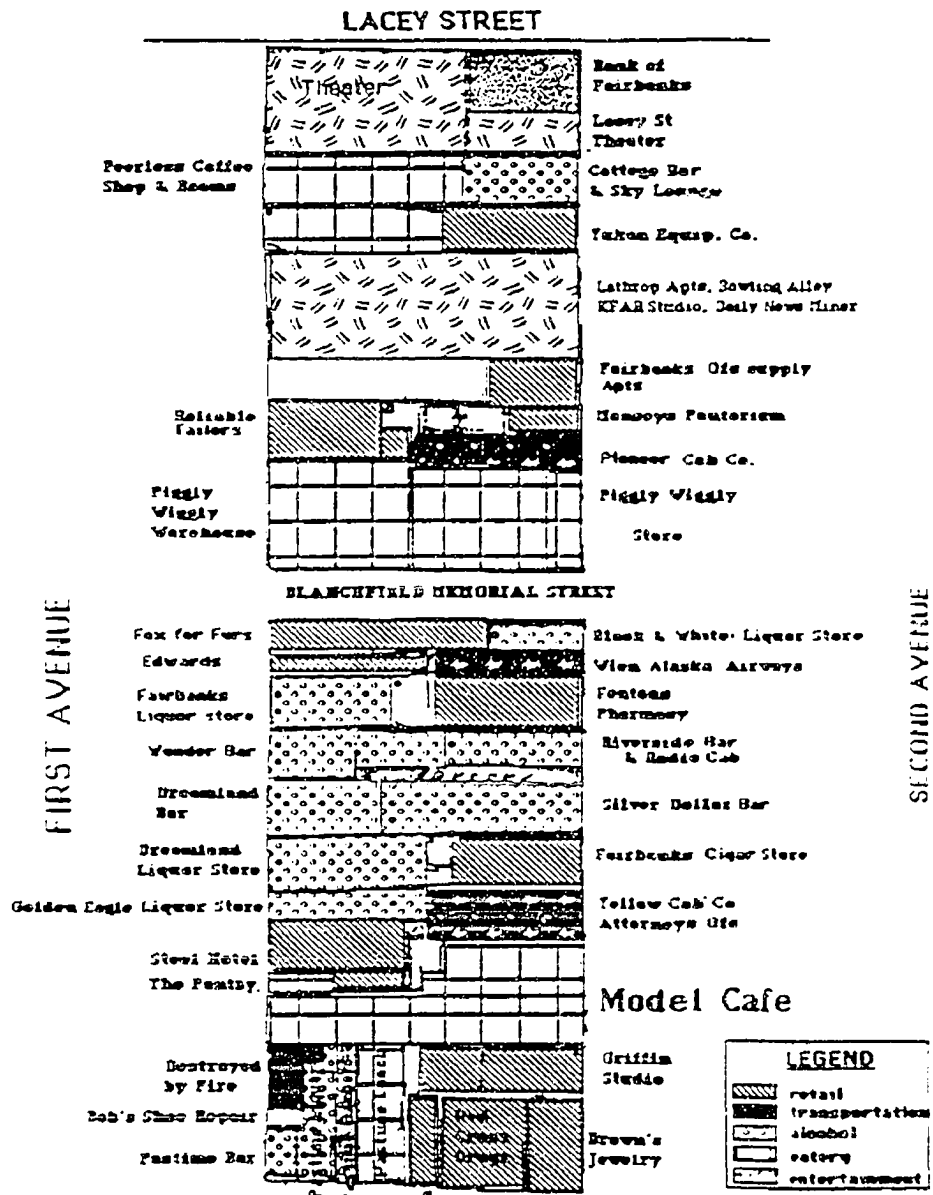
⁴⁶ Robert Nearing, interview by author, Fairbanks, Alaska, 3 May 1992.

⁴⁷ Hon. Hugh H. Connelly, interview by author, Fairbanks, Alaska, 4 March 1994.

⁴⁸ George Paskvan, interview by author, Fairbanks, Alaska, 22 March 1992.



MAP 4: Computer Generated Map of Second Avenue
Bars in Downtown Fairbanks.



**MAP 5: Computer Generated Map of Second Avenue
Bars in Downtown Fairbanks.**

of all the citizens in the city, not just for the individual. Natives and non-natives were equal. Everyone worked together.”⁴⁹

With the tremendous influx of people looking for the construction jobs, Fairbanks did not have adequate facilities to provide good quality living conditions. The utilities could not keep pace with the growth and schools were too small to house the increasing enrollment of new students. By 1949, double-shifting was suggested to accommodate the overflow of students. Sanitary conditions needed attention in the form of new sewer systems. The streets were in disrepair and housing was in great demand. Many of the existing structures, built in the early years, were substandard and posed health and safety risks. As described by Richard Cooley in 1954, “in the last four or five years the city has been presented with problems that, under more normal circumstances of growth, would have been spread over 20 or 30 years.”⁵⁰ With this expansion, the city found itself with enormous shortages, including enough money to fix the problems.

When ground was broken for Ladd Air Force Base, prior to World War II, the site was to be used for “a cold weather test station.”⁵¹ The area of 15th Avenue and Rickert Street was the public airport from 1926 until approximately 1930.⁵² (See Map #2 of Rickert Field.) The population of Fairbanks at that time was less than 4000 people. The area known today as Slaterville, was farmland, and Hamilton Acres was a patch of spruce trees. World War II catapulted both the Air Force Base and Fairbanks into a new era of growth.

On April 2, 1946, utilizing a city manager, problems resulted when the City Council members proved unwilling to relinquish their authority over management.⁵³ The City Manager lacked control and authority over city departments, which hampered city

⁴⁹ Harry Shikora, interview.

⁵⁰ Cooley, 22.

⁵¹ Fairbanks Jessen's Weekly, 2 May 1956.

⁵² Dirk Tordoff, interview by author, 15 February 1996.

⁵³ Cooley, 22.

operations.⁵⁴ The city of Fairbanks faced a mountain of expansion problems as it raced into the 1950s. By 1950, the population of the city of Fairbanks reached 5771.⁵⁵ The government had to get its house in order so it could be effective in securing the funding needed to address the growing pains of this young and prosperous town.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Kay Kennedy, "Fairbanks, Alaska, Business Survey. State of Our City Annexation, Migration Bring Population Gains." Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 1 February 1955.



PHOTO 22: Second Avenue in Fairbanks, Alaska - 1910s. William J. Craig Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks

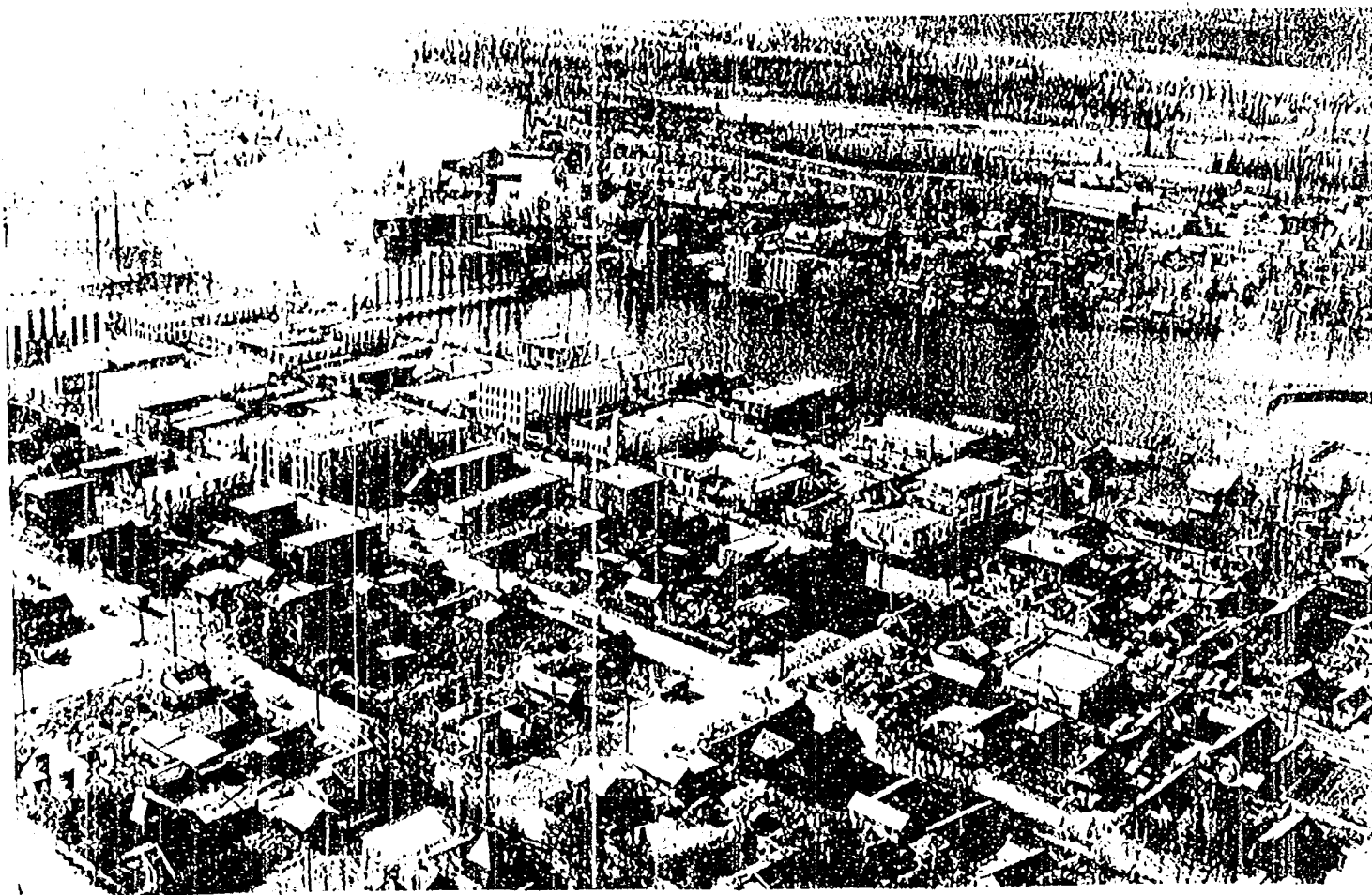


PHOTO 23: Aerial View of the Downtown Area in Fairbanks, Alaska - 1940s. Reuel Griffin Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The Bountiful 1950s

Enormous growth occurred during the 1950s. World War II gave Fairbanks a strong economic boost, and the Cold War ensured that the boost carried over into the next decade. City Council members committed themselves to provide better living conditions for citizens. To encourage new industrial development, the City Council passed a tax exemption for new industries set up for the purpose of manufacturing or processing products not already successfully manufactured or processed in the city and for which plants have not already been constructed and placed in operation.⁵⁶ Housing construction was vital, as substandard housing could not keep pace with the fast growing family population.

The core area remained the city's business center. However, new building faces began to emerge. Because of the many fires downtown in the 1940s, new building codes were instituted. The Daily News Miner built a new newspaper plant incorporating the Chena Building. Jessen's Daily also expanded in the core area. The Northward Building, located at the 400 block of Third and Fourth Avenues, was completed in the 1950s with the financial help of the Alaska Housing Authority.⁵⁷

The Chamber of Commerce actively worked on luring tourists to Fairbanks. Jack Whaley, chairman of the Chamber Tourist Committee introduced a plan, the first part of which included a permanent anchorage for the riverboat Nenana on the Chena River between Barnette and Turner Street. The second phase involved the development of an area between Third and Fourth Avenue where tourists would be told about Alaska from "corruption to church."⁵⁸ The committee hoped to put a restaurant on the corner of Turner and Third Street to cater to the public with "a totally Alaskan menu." Around the block from the restaurant they planned to have other businesses, such as a barber shop, a saloon, a dance hall, and a boot shop. Like many of the plans brought forth in Fairbanks' history, this plan never materialized.

⁵⁶Florence Strand, "Enterprises 'New to City' Given Help." Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 11 May 1954.

⁵⁷ Alaska Housing Authority, Annual Report, 1952, 7.

⁵⁸ Fairbanks Jessen's Weekly, 1 February 1956.

Because of population increase and substandard housing, the Alaska Housing Authority provided funds for Birch Park Housing Project located on lower First Avenue. Fairview Manor, constructed in 1951 on the site of old Weeks Field, across from the location of the present Borough Library and a block from the Arctic Bowl complex became the city's largest apartment complex.⁵⁹ Island Homes Subdivision, located northeast of Second Avenue across the Chena River, provided modern housing in a quiet suburban setting. Island Homes Subdivision was built with funds provided by the Federal Housing Administration. These homes were sold through Earl Cook Realty, and the money from the sale of these homes went back to fund other federal building projects.⁶⁰ The need to provide adequate housing prompted the construction of the facilities listed in Table 1:

TABLE 1

| HOUSING PROJECTS COMPLETED DURING THE 1950S | | | |
|---|----------|--------------|---------------------|
| Name | Occupied | No. Units | Estimated Occupancy |
| 1. Queens Court | 6/01/51 | 73 | 220 |
| 2. Dixon Apts. | 10/01/51 | 68 | 200 |
| 3. Fairview Manor | 10/01/51 | 272 | 825 |
| 4. Northward Bldg. | 3/01/52 | 210 | 350 |
| 5. Birch Park | 10/01/52 | 75 | 225 |
| 6. Polaris | 12/01/52 | 144 | 325 |
| 7. Hamilton Apts. | 12/18/52 | 24 | --- |
| 8. Island Homes | 1/01/53 | 150 homes | --- |
| 9. Arctic Park | 10/01/53 | 150 | --- |
| 10. Mooreland Court | --- | <u>200</u> | --- |
| | | 1,366 | |

Source: Richard Cooley, Fairbanks, Alaska, A Survey of Progress Juneau, 1954.

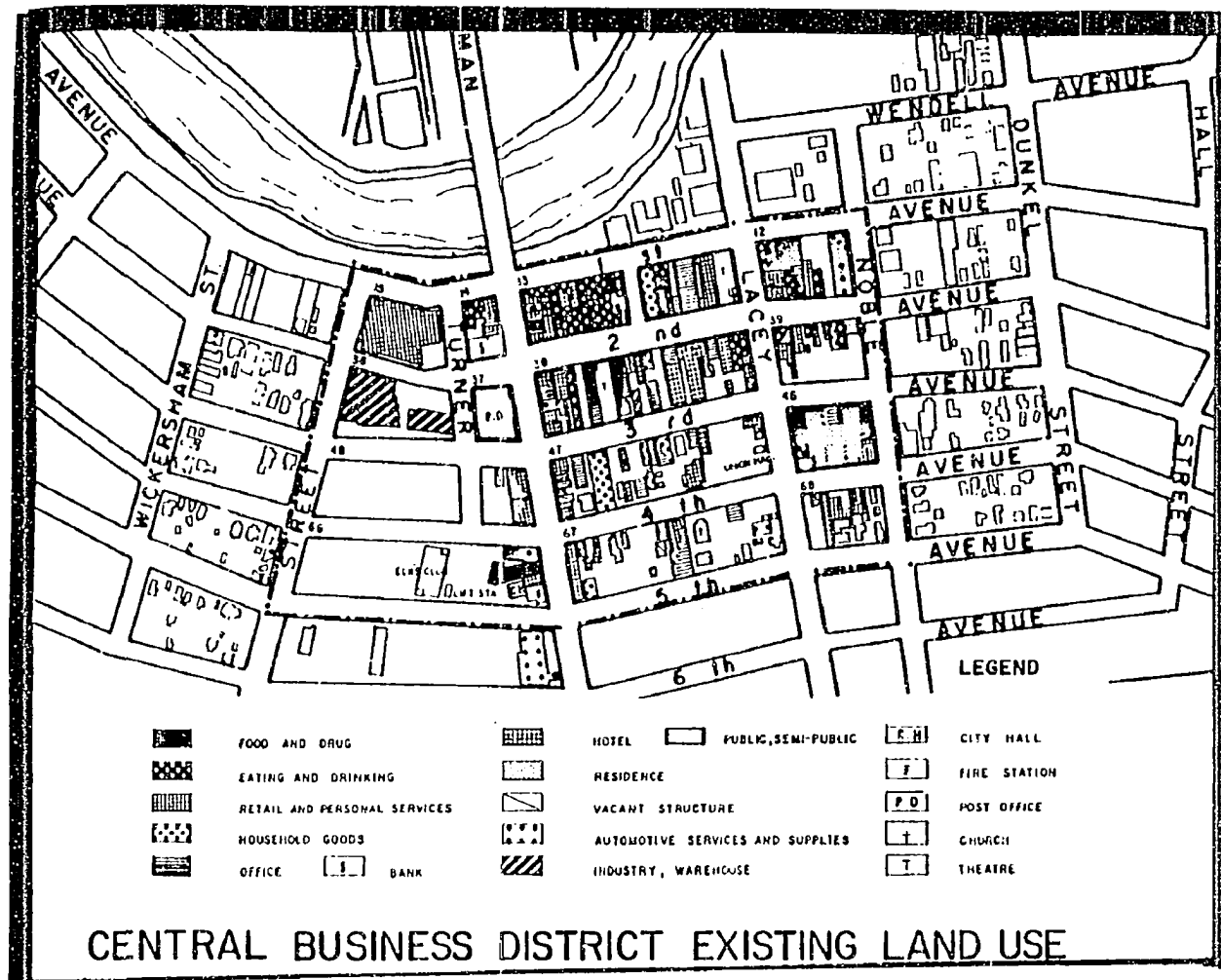
⁵⁹ Monahan, 165.

⁶⁰ Fairbanks, Jessen's Weekly, 1 February 1956.

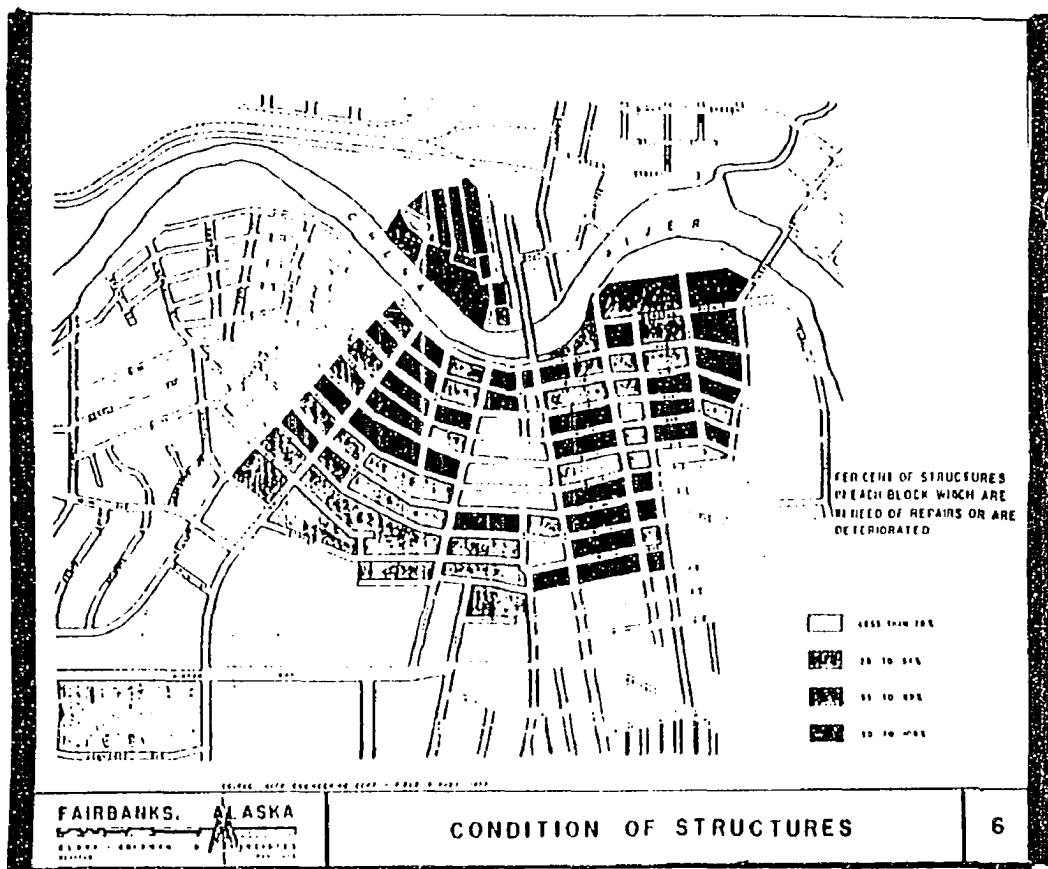
There were two types of home construction in the Fairbanks area, depending on the type of financing available. Those who were fortunate enough to get low interest housing loans were able to have houses built by building contractors. Others, however, built their homes in stages. They would build the house to a point where it was habitable. As money became available, the house would proceed to completion. This type of housing construction caused lower property evaluations in some subdivisions and detracted from any type of uniformity in living standards. Families could build a beautiful and expensive house but lost property value because their neighbors were building "out-of-pocket" and the adjacent houses always seemed to be partially finished. Zoning became a critical issue to city government because homeowners complained about low housing appraisals and the government was receiving lower property tax income because of undervalued property assessments. Map #6 shows the conditions of city structures and Map #7 shows the existing land use in 1959.

In 1953, a group of businessmen organized the Fairbanks Community Hotel Company, Inc., to find the necessary financing for a new hotel in the core area. The task of the Company was to obtain enough funds to build a fire-proof hotel-office building with ample space to accommodate small conventions and local functions. The Company did not succeed in its assigned task. The irony of the formation of this company became clear in the 1980s with the formation of the Fairbanks Development Authority, a non-profit organization intended to find ways to revitalize the core area. The organization tried, in vain, to get investors to build a hotel on Second Avenue. They failed in their efforts just as the Fairbanks Community Hotel Company had. Nevertheless, core-area housing capabilities expanded during the 1950s with construction of other new apartment buildings and hotels.

The city also cleaned up the core area and removed substandard housing units that had been abandoned by their owners. The Alaska Housing Authority provided funds for urban renewal projects, the most notable part of which was the removal of the Fourth Avenue Line. Urban renewal started at Third Avenue on the north, Cushman Street to the east, Seventh Avenue to the south, and Barnette on the west. As the substandard dwellings fell, new business establishments took their places. With the help of government bonds,



MAP 6: Existing Land Use. Clark-Coleman & Associates, Comprehensive Plan for Fairbanks, Alaska, 1959.



MAP 7: Conditions of Structures in the Fairbanks City Limits.
Clark-Coleman & Associates, Comprehensive Plan for
Fairbanks, Alaska, 1959.

put in cement sidewalks and added street lighting.⁶¹

Fairbanks had a transient population during the 1950s in part due to seasonal construction work on defense contracts, as well as the presence of many military personnel who left after completing their tours-of-duty. It seemed that the population changed with the seasons, "Work is highly seasonal, and white workers as well as Eskimos and Indians are mostly transient, as is the Service Personnel stationed nearby. Native people always have been transient in Fairbanks, but today everyone is on the move."⁶²

Unemployment peaked during the winter months because of construction shutdowns. The high cost of living in Fairbanks forced some of the unemployed family members to spend the winter in Anchorage. As a result, Anchorage unemployment statistics proved to be misleading and were shown to be higher than Fairbanks'.⁶³

Besides a transient population, the city faced other civic problems. The attitude of the citizenry appeared to be "do what was necessary for the good of the community." There seemed to be resentment of anyone who appeared to stand in the way of "progress." An example of this appeared in a Daily News Miner editorial:

The city will soon be facing a completely ridiculous situation, having a very modern new bridge across Noyes Slough, but no approach that will permit motorists to use the bridge. There is a land problem caused by fact that one land owner has very stubbornly refused to come to terms with the city government.

We do not know his motives. We can't say whether he purchased the land for speculation and now wants every dime he can get, or whether he honestly feels that he has not been treated fairly by the

⁶¹ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 6 April 1953.

⁶² "St. Matthew's, Fairbanks, Serving Shifting Population," 4 September 1954, Lulu Fairbanks Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

⁶³ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 23 January 1953.

city. But regardless of his motives, he is doing a great disservice to the people of Fairbanks. He is very seriously holding up progress. And the bridge congestion here is very serious, and should be alleviated at the first possible moment. We urge this individual to be fair in this matter. We urge him to consider all factors, including the welfare of the people in the area. It isn't at all fair for such an important project as this bridge to be held up by one solitary person.⁶⁴

As money continued to flow into Fairbanks, the core-area bustled with shoppers and businessmen. Even though there were many bars and liquor stores in the core-area, there was never a problem with drunks lying in the streets or citizens being "hassled" by inebriated patrons of the liquor establishments. Judge Hugh Connelly explained why this occurred: "There were laws on the books to deal with drunks, namely, drunk in public. If a drunk staggered in the street, the police quickly arrested the individual and took him to jail. Public drunkenness was not tolerated."⁶⁵

Indeed, the manner in which the Fairbanks Police Department attacked alcohol problems in the core area would, itself, constitute a social problem by today's standards. During the 1950s, the city jail was located in the basement of City Hall at Fifth and Cushman. This jail was described as "the hole," a filthy pit at the bottom of city hall. Only one toilet and one sink served the entire cell block. "Food for prisoners consisted of coffee, water and one stale roll each day, augmented by one full meal a week."⁶⁶ Prisoners lay in their own filth, and the main cell block was generally grossly overcrowded. The city did not provide medical treatment for prisoners, and no 24 hour mandatory arraignment policy existed. The following incident graphically illustrates the callous attitude of law enforcement toward prisoners during this period of Fairbanks history.

⁶⁴ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 1 April 1953.

⁶⁵ Connelly, interview.

⁶⁶ Cooley, 26.

On April 17, 1953, police arrested Vernon Peterson on a drunk charge and placed him in the city jail. During the night, Peterson began convulsing and continued to experience a series of convulsions from Friday night until the following Tuesday. Several other prisoners tried to help Peterson and brought the problem to the attention of the police, all to no avail. On Tuesday, Chief Ray Skelton ordered two police officers to get Peterson from the cell and bring him to the office. When Peterson arrived at the office, Chief Skelton ordered Peterson to drink several glasses of water, then drink several cups of coffee. After Peterson drank the coffee, Chief Skelton gave him a glass of wine and bromide mixture. Chief Skelton forced Peterson to drink the liquids by threatening to shoot Peterson with a tear gas gun if he did not comply. After Peterson drank the mixtures, Chief Skelton ordered the patrolmen to take Peterson back to the jail cell. While enroute to the cell, Peterson began convulsing again, and the police officers called Dr. Henry Storrs to check on Peterson. Dr. Storrs immediately ordered Peterson to be taken to St. Joseph's Hospital, where Peterson died later that day.

Chief Skelton reprimanded the police officers for sending Peterson to the hospital without authorization. Skelton stated that he did not have a budget to provide medical treatment for drunk prisoners. On April 24th, during the inquest into Peterson's death, Chief Skelton admitted that he threatened Peterson with the tear gas pistol in order to make him drink and said:

These people are dehydrated and need liquid. I have threatened prisoners often but I don't recall ever having struck a prisoner. I have drawn my gun twice. Three times I've had to use a blackjack and three times my fist. I have had no intent of being brutal.⁶⁷

Officer Struble, one of the officers who called the doctor for Peterson, testified at the inquest. After his testimony, Chief Skelton fired Officer Struble. On April 29th, Chief Skelton was demoted, by order of the City Council, from Chief of Police to patrolman and placed in charge of juvenile matters. The only public response, beside the demotion, came

⁶⁷ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 25 April 1953.

in an editorial in the Daily News Miner on April 23, 1953. In it the writer criticized the city government for the condition of the jail and the neglect of the prisoners. "Just because he is drunk, will he have to pay with his life, they are human beings, and deserve all the rights of an American citizen."⁶⁸

Robert Nearing, a police officer during the 1950s, stated that dealing with drunks was one of those necessary evils in the city. "There was no rehabilitation center to take the drunks to, we couldn't take them to the hospital, so we dumped them in the hole until they sobered up."⁶⁹

The callous care for prisoners was not the exception, but the rule. Throughout the state, drunks were not tolerated in the communities. According to Judge Hugh Connelly, Anchorage handled prisoners much in the same manner as Fairbanks.⁷⁰ The communities were too busy building housing and businesses; they didn't have time to rebuild lives. The 1950s were a time for progress, and alcoholics apparently represented regression.

By the end of the 1950s, the laws concerning holding prisoners after arrest changed. Instead of keeping the prisoner locked up for days without a hearing, the rule changed to mandatory arraignment within 24 hours. This law was introduced to the legislature by Warren Taylor, who later became a Superior Court Judge for the Fourth Judicial District.⁷¹

In 1952, there were 1297 arrests. Of the 1297 arrests, 950 were directly related to alcohol (914 drunk charges, 36 driving while intoxicated). There were 90 assault and battery charges and 35 vagrancy charges.⁷² During the first four months of 1953, there

⁶⁸ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 21 April 1953.

⁶⁹ Nearing, interview.

⁷⁰ Connelly, interview.

⁷¹ Connelly, interview.

⁷² Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 21 January 1953.

were two prisoner deaths at the city jail, both related to alcohol, both involving persons who failed to receive medical treatment in time to help them.

As Jean Crank related:

"During the 1950s, the attitude of the people in Fairbanks was do what was necessary for progress. We thought of the common good for all instead of the common good of the individual. We believed in the government and didn't question their actions pertaining to political decisions. Whatever the council decided, we believed it was in our best interest."⁷³

Richard Cooley described Fairbanks as "unique" and compared the city with those cities in the United States which grew up overnight due to the building of atomic energy facilities. In most cases, the federal government provided funds to these "atomic cities" for building utility systems and other city facilities. Fairbanks did not get the same degree of help from the federal government and had to raise much of the money from within its own city boundaries.

The federal government did provide \$800,000 from the Housing and Home Finance Agency for extension of Fairbanks water distribution system. The city reassessed real and personal property and set a mill rate of 20 mills to the dollar. City officials also instituted sales tax and issued general obligation and revenue bonds with the approval of the taxpayers. By 1954, the sales tax had been raised to 2%. The city still could not keep up and the taxpayers could not give much more.⁷⁴

Fires still plagued the business district because of the substandard construction and the lack of fire hydrants throughout the core area. By 1953, Fairbanks had submitted

⁷³ Jean Crank, interview by author, Fairbanks, Alaska, 1 March, 1995.

⁷⁴ Cooley, 23.

applications to the Alaska Public Works Administration for 12 public projects valued at \$6,308,000, as shown in Table 2. Included in the list of projects appeared the water distribution system which gave the city 120 new fire hydrants. Table 3 shows a complete list of projects from 1950 to 1958.

The era of the 1950s was a time of expansion. Second Avenue and the core area continued their change from shoddy, substandard wooden buildings to the modern, cement and steel multi-floor buildings. The citizens of Fairbanks willingly paid their way to make living in the interior comfortable. They voted for the sales tax and they paid the high property taxes. As businessmen looked for ways to expand the economy of the core area, intolerance of those who could not pay their way grew.

No significant social programs to help the poor or the alcoholics existed. The businessmen sold the liquor but took no responsibility for the outcome. The families themselves were charged with taking care of their own "problem" members.

On February 1, 1957, Second Avenue lost one of its most well-known and interesting citizens. Hulda Ford, 83, died at St. Joseph's Hospital from "malnutrition." Mrs. Ford had arrived in Fairbanks in 1906 as a dance hall girl. She purchased property on Second Avenue with the money she made and soon amassed a fortune from store rentals and property sales. In her later years, it was said that Mrs. Ford carried a shopping bag filled with property deeds and uncashed checks worth as much as \$500,000. In spite of all her wealth, Mrs. Ford would scavenge garbage cans looking for food and other used items. In essence, she could be considered Fairbank's earliest "bag lady." When she died, relatives attempted to claim her estate. However, the city took much of the core area land she owned because of back taxes owed. She had been a hard working woman who became one of the wealthiest women in Fairbanks, yet lived the life of a pauper and died the same way.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Stars and Stripes, 25 February 1957, Mrs. Hulda Ford Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Construction work was plentiful during the summer months; federal government funds provided some of the means to build new homes and upgrade utilities. Businessmen formed groups and made plans to bring in new money by enticing tourists to come to the core area. The emphasis centered around profits and progress. This was Fairbanks in the 1950s.

TABLE 2

| ALASKA PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT APPLICATIONS FOR THE CITY OF FAIRBANKS - 1953 | | | |
|--|---------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Type of Project | Total Cost | Cost of Project to City | Status |
| 1. Utilities | \$ 75,200 | | Withdrawn |
| 2. Water Treatment Plant | 592,000 | \$ 246,000 | Under construction |
| 3. Streets | 396,000 | 198,000 | Under construction |
| 4. Coal Handling Facility | 221,800 | | Withdrawn |
| 5. Plant Site | 50,000 | | Withdrawn |
| 6. Shop | 14,000 | | Withdrawn |
| 7. Telephone Exchange | 60,000 | | Withdrawn |
| 8. Sewer Improvements | 152,000 | 76,000 | Allotted |
| 9. Water System | 2,000,000 | 1,000,000 | Allotment imminent |
| 10. Sewer Extension | 168,000 | 84,000 | Allotment imminent |
| 11. Street Improvements | 7000,000 | 350,000 | Indefinite |
| 12. Addition to Sewer System | 1,979,000 | 989,500 | Recently applied for |

Source: Fairbanks, Alaska. A Survey of Progress.

TABLE 3

| ALASKA PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS, FAIRBANKS AREA - 1950 TO 1958 (Excluding Those of the University of Alaska) | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1950 | School, Fairbanks | \$ 470,872.77 |
| 1950 | School, Fairbanks | 156,166.07 |
| 1951 | Water Supply, Fairbanks | 491,299.70 |
| 1952 | School, Fairbanks | 691,977.43 |
| 1952 | Bentley Island, Streets and Sewers | 577,452.53 |
| 1953 | High School, Fairbanks | 2,368,116.00 |
| 1953 | Streets and Sidewalks | 397,600.00 |
| 1954 | Grade School, Fairbanks | 474,144.53 |
| 1954 | Water Distribution System, Fairbanks | 1,564,800.00 |
| 1954 | Weeks Field Sewer and Lift Station | 272,535.35 |
| 1954 | Coal Facilities, Fairbanks | 289,350.00 |
| 1955 | Sewer System, Fairbanks | 395,575.00 |
| 1957 | Elementary School | 669,000.00 |
| 1957 | High School Addition, Fairbanks | 474,000.00 |

Source: Monahan, Robert L. The Development of Settlement in the Fairbanks Area, Alaska. A study of Permanence. Personal communication between Robert Monahan and Thomas G. Mooney, Director Public Works, Office of Territories, U. S. Department of the Interior, Juneau, Alaska, 27 January, 1958.

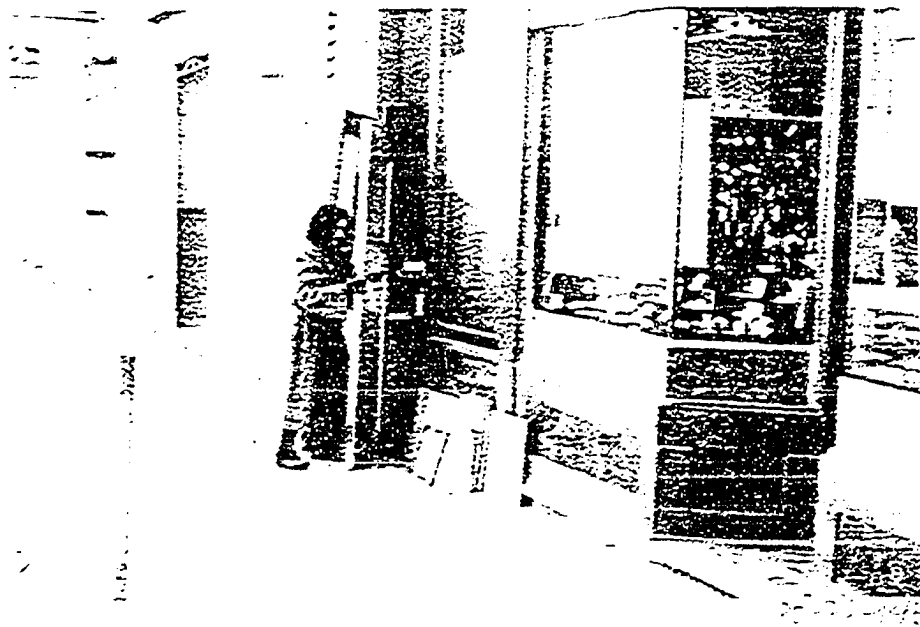


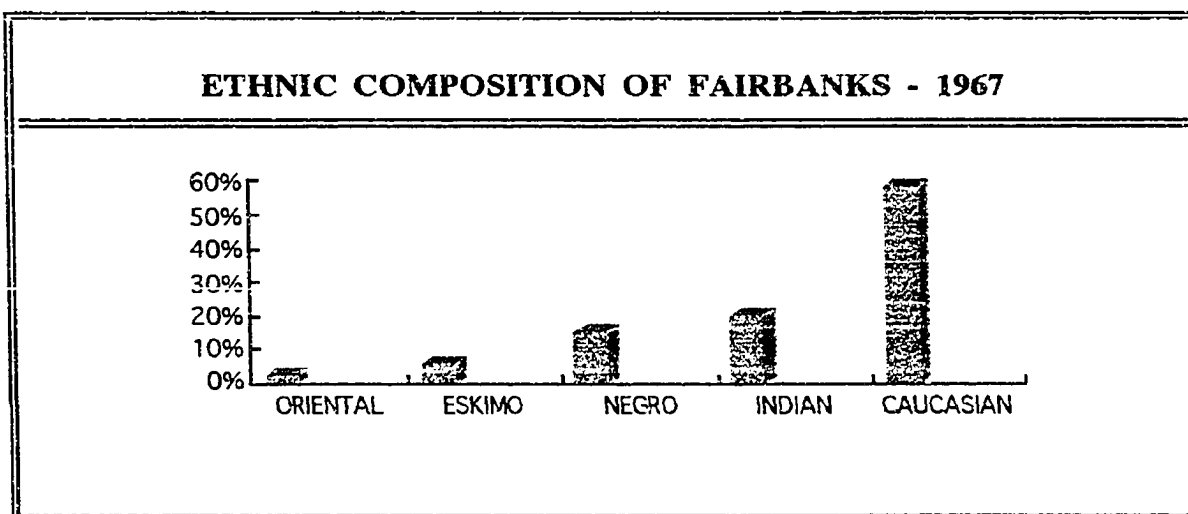
PHOTO 24: Mrs. Hulga Ford. Dorothy Lottus Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The Decade of Social Concern - The 1960's

The wealth of the 1950s had caused the development of multi-tiered socioeconomic groups and had enabled buildings and utilities to be repaired and upgraded. By the beginning of the 1960s the building boom had begun to decline and free flow of money into the core area had begun to shrink. Inequity in salaries surfaced among the ethnic groups in the Fairbanks community. Because of the decline in the job market, those at the lower end of the economic scale began to show the effects of poverty. Awareness of these changes in the 1960s brought about a serious look at the social needs of the community such as overcrowded schools, where double shifting of students was the only solution to relieve the bulging classrooms.

Fairbanks was a youthful town. Its citizens averaged 30 years of age, and most had at least a high school education and owned a vehicle. These people were considered "affluent;" the citizens with the money. The majority were Protestant and Caucasians with 2 or more children.⁷⁶ Table 4 illustrates the diversity of the population of Fairbanks in 1967.

TABLE 4



Source: Sessions, Fairbanks Community Survey, 32.

⁷⁶ Sessions, 15.

The government remained major employer in Fairbanks. The military and city, state, and federal government civilian workers accounted for one-third of the jobs, while the remainder of the gainfully employed worked in construction and service related industries. Less than 3 percent worked in the manufacturing sector.⁷⁷ The University of Alaska accounted for the largest growth in state government employment in the 1960s.

The number of natives migrating to the Fairbanks area increased at a more rapid pace than that of non-natives. This was due, in part, to the high unemployment rate in the villages:

The unemployment rate among native persons residing in the western portion of Northwest Alaska...was estimated at 53.1 percent in September 1967. The unemployment rate is virtually 100 percent in many communities during the winter, except for substance hunting and fishing.⁷⁸

Natives employed in Fairbanks filled the unskilled, seasonal jobs, getting caught in a tangled web of poverty. Without the necessary education and skills, the natives could not get the higher paying jobs. Without money, they could not leave the city to go back to the village. They were trapped in a "no win" situation. The 1960s was an era of increasing social awareness among the native groups. As poverty among their ranks deepened, their frustration and resentment began to surface.

Who were the citizens most affected by the economic downturn? The elderly and the native citizens took the brunt of the slowed economy. They were Fairbanks' poverty stricken citizens. Frank Q. Sessions' 1967 survey revealed:

There is a high relationship between poverty and the incidence of illness, alcoholic consumption, and "cabin fever". Income, job status, and education are highly related. Using the criterion of

⁷⁷ Donald D. Gilmer, Overall Economic Development Plan, (Fairbanks: Fairbanks North Star Borough, March 1969), 4.

⁷⁸ Gilmer, 6.

income, 27.8 per cent of the population are poor and 12.9 percent are living in abject poverty. The poor are the Indians and the elderly. Also, the poor tend to have larger families.⁷⁹

The elderly and the native populations lived close to the core-area because of the accessibility of goods and services. Native families lived at Birch Park, a low income housing facility managed by the Alaska Housing Authority. Eskimo Village was located across the river in the industrial area. These houses had been built by the Alaska Railroad during the construction phase of the railroad in the 1920s for natives who worked for the railroad. The elderly lived in the Northward Building or in the original cabins still in use near the core area.

However, during the 1960s a compact shopping area downtown began to disappear. According to a Marketability Survey of 1969, "The development of outlying shopping facilities in and around Fairbanks will alter the buying habits somewhat, and will absorb some of the business which has traditionally gone downtown."⁸⁰

In 1965, the Piggly Wiggly Grocery Store, located on the 500 block of Second Avenue, moved out of the core area to its new location across Noyes Slough in Grahl, the present site of Gavora Mall. Carls Foodland built a new store at Twelfth and Gaffney and lured shoppers away from the core area. Safeway still maintained its store behind the Federal Court Building at Second and Turner, but other core area businesses followed the population as it expanded across the river and west toward the University. New housing construction and new subdivisions, such as Hamilton Acres, Mooreland Acres, and Island Homes, lured families away from the city into the suburbs. As more automobiles arrived on the scene, the need to be close to the core-area lessened. Fairbanks apparently followed the trend of the United States with its "love affair with the automobile."

The new, modern grocery stores challenged the small grocer to either expand or close. The bigger grocery outlets captured the "bush business" and cut deeply into the

⁷⁹ Sessions, 47.

⁸⁰ Gilmer, 28.

pockets of the small, neighborhood grocery. Lavery's Grocery, at the corner of Cushman and Second Avenue, closed because they could not compete with the cash and carry grocery stores that had now crossed the line from conventional grocers to grocery, variety, drug, and mercantile department store. Karen Lavery stated that her father could no longer "carry individuals on the books" as in the past.⁸¹ The Empress Theater closed its doors in 1961 because of declining business and reopened as the Co-Op Drug Store.

As more and more people arrived from the lower 48 states, they brought with them the demands for more immediate access to goods and commodities. The population more than doubled in ten years, but housing and utilities did not keep up with the influx. Not only were people coming to Alaska to find work, but many families arrived with the expansion of the nearby military bases. Table 5 illustrates the increase in population from 1910 to 1960.

The core area could not accommodate new growth. As a result, Donald D. Gilmer's 1969 Overall Economic Development Plan for Fairbanks revealed that, "there are \$3,260,000 in personal consumption expenditures being made in other places by residents of the trading area which would be made in downtown Fairbanks if adequate facilities existed."⁸²

Adequate facilities did not exist, however, and their absence crippled the growth of the core area. Good commercial office space with adequate parking was in great demand in this area. Office space proved inadequate but profitable. The demand for office space had caused owners to convert one- or two-story family dwellings into offices. The owners demanded the same high rental for these old, substandard buildings as for new, modern buildings.

⁸¹ Karen Lavery, interview by author, Fairbanks, Alaska, 1 October 1992.

⁸² Gilmer, 30.

TABLE 5

| CITY OF FAIRBANKS POPULATION 16TH ELECTORAL DISTRICT - 1910 TO 1960 (In Persons) | | |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Census Year | Fairbanks City Limits | Fairbanks District |
| 1910 | 3,541 | 11,000 (approx.) |
| 1920 | 1,155 | 2,182 |
| 1929 | 2,101 | 3,446 |
| 1939 | 3,455 | 5,692 |
| 1950 | 5,771 | 9,409 |
| 1960 | 13,311 | 43,412 |

Source: Gilmer, Overall Economic Development Plan, March 1969, 6.

"The national vacancy rate for downtown office space in the 1960's was three to five per cent. In the downtown core-area of Fairbanks, the office space vacancy ratio was less than three percent."⁸³ An increasing parking problem hurt the core area. With the increase in population, more and more cars appeared on the road. In 1969, "91 per cent of the shoppers utilized either their own or a friend's car to reach the Foodland store at Thirteenth and Cushman street, and 79 per cent traveled by private car to get downtown for shopping on the day interviewed."⁸⁴

Alaska Airlines moved from the Nordale Hotel on May 14, 1966, and opened their new office at Twelfth and Cushman. The management cited the parking problems on Second Avenue as the primary reason for leaving the core area. They felt that it was a great inconvenience for their customers to waste time trying to find a parking space in order to do business with their company.⁸⁵

⁸³ Gilmer, 43.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 14 May 1966.

Alcohol problems still plagued Fairbanks. During the 1960s, the biggest trouble spots were found along south Cushman, which had been annexed by the city during the 1950s. Bars such as the Western Bar, the Squadron Club, and others, kept law enforcement officers busy. Things were so bad at the Western Bar that the military put the bar "off limits" to soldiers. Patricia Johnson, one of the first female mail carriers in Fairbanks, stated that one of the male letter carriers was attacked while delivering mail at the Western Bar. Word came down from postal officials that mail would not be delivered inside the Western Bar because of the violence.⁸⁶ Robert (Bob) Nearing relayed similar information about the violence on South Cushman. Bob said that usually fights involved multiple suspects and most of the assaults involved use of some type of weapon.⁸⁷ As before, these assaults were usually alcohol related.

In 1967, natural disaster struck the core area. The Chena River overflowed its banks, and most of the Fairbanks area flooded. Building foundations crumbled as high flood waters filled the basements and, in some places, the upper levels of the buildings. The muddy silt flowed through homes destroying floors, carpets, and furniture. Sheetrock walls deteriorated beyond repair. It happened so quickly that people did not have time to rescue their possessions, and store owners did not have time to protect their inventories. By the time the Chena River receded, many people and business owners had lost almost everything they owned. Out of that devastating flood came economic relief from the federal government.

⁸⁶ Patricia Johnson, interview by author, Fairbanks, Alaska, 19 September 1995.

⁸⁷ Robert Nearing, interview.



PHOTO 25: Flood in Fairbanks, Alaska - 1967. D. Johnson Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

In fact, the 1960s' biggest economic boost followed the 1967 Tanana Valley flood when \$60 million dollars of Small Business Administration (SBA) funds entered the Fairbanks economy. There were 3500 disaster loans made to businessmen and homeowners affected by the flood. SBA refinanced existing business loans and placed no limit on loan sizes.⁸⁸ The flood relief brought money for new construction, and with this new construction, more people arrived in Fairbanks to fill those construction jobs.

For the most part, the core area remained the center of a self-sustaining service economy. However, the suburbs continued to attract families away from the downtown area, and business continued to follow the populace. Overcrowded schools, unsatisfactory access to overloaded utility systems, and increasing city property taxes forced residents to look to the Fairbanks North Star Borough for relief, as they moved outside Fairbanks' city limits.

In 1969, oil was discovered on the North Slope of Alaska. This discovery forever change the "small town innocence" of the core area. With existing social problems still unresolved, the building of the pipeline hastened the destruction of the core area and heightened the awareness of the city's alcohol and drug problems.

⁸⁸ Beverly Isenson, "And One Year Later: SBA 'Owns' Half the City, Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 14 August 1967.

The Decade of Black Gold - The 1970s

On February 22, 1972, a terrible fire broke out at the Nordale Hotel. This author remembers watching the hotel fully ablaze. Before the embers cooled, rumors flooded the 500 block of Second Avenue. "Did you hear, Eva didn't get out." One man told that an old woman ran through the hall, telling everyone to get out because of a fire. This occurred on the same floor where Eva lived. Eva McGown lost her life in the fire, and the core area residents were saddened that they lost an important part of Fairbanks history.⁸⁹ Hugh Fate told me that he felt Second Avenue and the core area began its decline with the loss of the Nordale Hotel.⁹⁰

If you recall the discussion of the war years of the 1940s and the building boom of the 1950s with the influx of people into Fairbanks, then you can believe in the theory that history does repeat itself. The decade of the 1970s was a tumultuous time, an era of transient workers, rapid flow of money through the Fairbanks economy, and the crime and discord that the sudden wealth created, and political shortsightedness which created a strained social and economic infrastructure in the city.

Fairbanks was not ready for the "boom cycle" of the pipeline. Housing remained scarce; utilities, incapable of keeping up with demand; and schools, overcrowded with children in all grades.⁹¹ Had Fairbanks learned from the experiences of the 1940s and 1950s?

By 1970, the post-flood funds had been spent and the economy had begun to level off. With the expectation of a new pipeline, however, Fairbanks was about to become the new staging area for the North Slope oil companies. The Bentley property on the Old Steese Highway was chosen as the site for the storage of the pipe sections to be used in the pipeline construction.

⁸⁹ Daily News Miner, 23 February 1972.

⁹⁰ Hugh Fate, interview by author, Juneau, Alaska, 16 February 1995.

⁹¹ Dixon, 123.

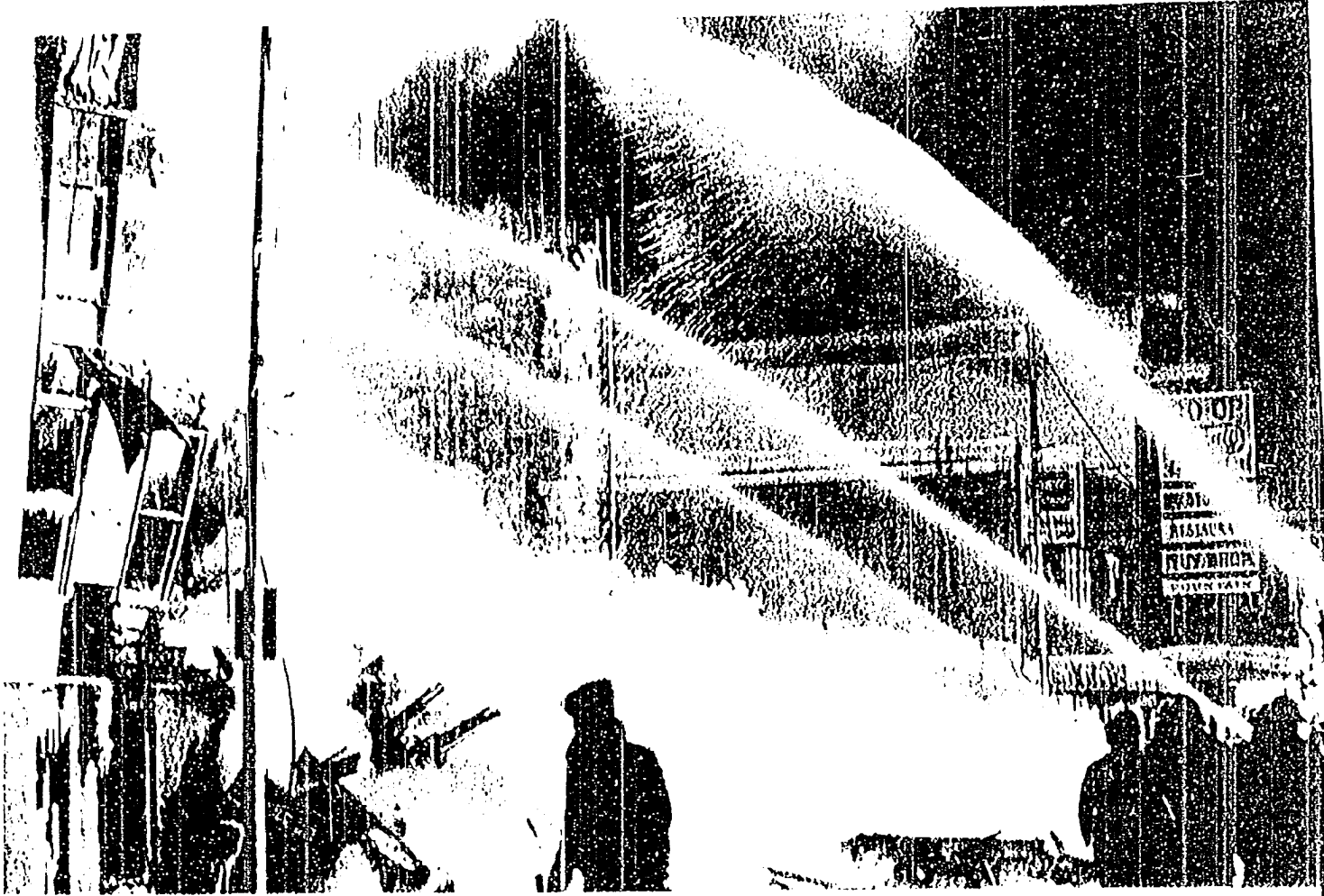


PHOTO 26: Nordale Hotel Fire in Fairbanks, Alaska 1972. Fairbanks Daily News Miner, February, 1972



PHOTO 27: Nordale Hotel Fire in Fairbanks, Alaska - 1972. Fairbanks Daily News Miner, February, 1972.

According to the All Alaska Weekly on February 8, 1974, Alyeska Pipeline Service Company announced that they had signed a lease for the use of the North Post site of Ft. Wainwright. Apparently, representatives of Alyeska had been in secret negotiations with representatives of the army and with Senator Ted Stevens. The state and local governments had not been privy to any information about the lease, and when the announcement came, the local government and the business owners expressed outrage about the secret deal. They felt betrayed that they had been left out of the lease competition.

Some businessmen were angry that Alyeska was isolating itself from the Fairbanks business community. An Alyeska spokesman replied that they needed a larger amount of space under one roof than could be provided by the private sector. Chuck Rees, owner of North Star Terminals, a large industrial complex located on Van Horn Road, disagreed.⁹² Ft. Wainwright also had been chosen as the headquarters for Bechtel Corporation, a company which was to oversee the management of pipeline construction. Wackenhut Security also used Ft. Wainwright as a base of operations for pipeline security, and the army base was also housed pipeline workers. Alyeska leased warehouses constructed at South Cushman Street and Van Horn Road for storage of other pipeline parts and for additional office space for Alyeska Pipeline Company.

From the onset, there were those who felt that Fairbanks would not be affected by the pipeline. Others believed that Fairbanks was in for an unprecedented period of growth. In the beginning of 1970, plans were formulated to ease into the boom that the pipeline was to bring. Community meetings explored the probable social and economic impacts. Local government disagreed with Alyeska officials on the potential pipeline impact:

Charles Elder, President of Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, stated Alyeska was in Fairbanks to build a pipeline, not to provide social services. He assured Mayor Carlson, "Your town won't be impacted because we'll put our people in camps." Carlson stated that workers could not be isolated from local communities.⁹³

⁹² Fairbanks Pioneer All Alaska Weekly, 8 February 1974.

⁹³ Leslie A. Korvola, "Lessons From the Trans-Alaska Pipeline Experience" (master's thesis, University of Alaska, September, 1986), 7.

In fact, a study provided for Alyeska Pipeline Service Company revealed, "Housing shortages will occur....An increase in victimless crime (i.e. prostitution, gambling, con games) can be expected...resulting in a demand for additional police services."⁹⁴

Second Avenue became the social focal point of Fairbanks during the pipeline. The bars of Second Avenue traditionally had been the gathering places for local businessmen and other regular customers. Even native families would meet at certain bars. Often kin from the interior would come into town and meet their relatives at their favorite bar or at the Co-Op Drug Store. During the pipeline, the bars swelled with newcomers, forcing the local patrons away from their favorite meeting places. The native population suffered discrimination as bar owners refused their patronage and, at times, forcibly removed them from establishments. Some bars did continue to serve the native clientele, and Second Avenue became a core area divided. There were bars for whites, bars for blacks, and bars for natives.⁹⁵

At 5:00 a.m., the bars would empty and their patrons would fill the streets of Second Avenue. Hundreds of drunks would crowd the sidewalks, and fights often ensued. Two police officers were permanently assigned to foot patrol duties 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Just before the bars closed, police officers would park their patrol vehicles in strategic locations on the 500 block of Second Avenue in order to be readily available to quell the fist fights. As fist fights or other violent altercations occurred among the drunks who stumbled from the bars, police would immediately whisk the troublemakers away. Drugs flowed through the city streets, and dealers could be found on any street corner.

The prediction of prostitution and gambling became reality. In fact, prostitution became the most common "victimless" crime in the core area. Unlike prostitutes of the earlier years of Fairbanks, the modern "ladies of the night" were not concerned with the health and well-being of the men they met; they were concerned with the sizes of their wallets. When prostitution arrests were made, prostitutes usually returned to the street before the police finished their paperwork. It was not uncommon for a prostitute to be

⁹⁴ Korvola, 6.

⁹⁵ Howard Mahler, interview by author at Fairbanks, Alaska, 27 February, 1996.

arrested more than once in one night. Prostitution was organized by men and women from the lower 48 states.⁹⁶ Each boss, commonly known as a "pimp," hired five or six "girls," also known as "hookers," to work the street. An entire operation was known as "a stable." During the pipeline years, some pimps met to divide Second Avenue into working districts. Each pimp had his girls work a section of the core area, and all agreed to keep within the prescribed boundaries.⁹⁷

In May, 1975, someone broke the agreement. One evening, a black hooker went into the Savoy Bar to look for business. Unfortunately, this was not in her territory. The Savoy Bar was patronized by the native groups. As a result of this intrusion, a two-day riot occurred on Second Avenue during which a number of persons were stabbed, police officers were hurt by rocks and bottles being hurled in the air, and many people were arrested on a variety of charges.⁹⁸

On the second day of the riots, Alaska State Troopers from all parts of the state arrived in Fairbanks and met behind the State Court Building. From that point, the troopers, who were dressed in riot gear, stormed Second Avenue. They walked side-by-side with large shields and arrested anyone who threatened them. The scene reminded this author of gladiators dressed in armor getting ready to do battle. There were no more riots after that second day. However, the disorder brought attention to Second Avenue and suggested that the core area was out of control.⁹⁹

During the day, the core area assumed the appearance of a normal shopping and business district. Men in business suits would walk down Second Avenue to patronize local restaurants, citizens would do their banking or go to the post office to get mail, and

⁹⁶ Los Angeles Times, 18-20 November 1975.

⁹⁷ Taken from personal observations and experiences of the author as a police officer during the pipeline years and collaborated by Howard Mahler.

⁹⁸ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 11 August 1975.

⁹⁹ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 10 August 1975.

tourists flooded in to see the drunks passed out on the Chamber lawn or staggering out of the bars at noon.

However, Second Avenue soon gained the reputation of a throwback to the wild days of the gold rush era.¹⁰⁰ People came to see the bars that workers talked about. Although the bars were less active during the day, the prostitutes still stood on every corner. People complained that prostitutes would walk up to a car stopped at a red light and solicit business.¹⁰¹ Husbands would be propositioned while walking down the street with their wives. Bystanders were sometime caught in the middle of the fighting. On June 12, 1976, at approximately 4:40 a.m., Shirley Demientieff was grazed by a bullet on the right leg when one of the prostitutes fired four shots from a gun.¹⁰²

Another social problem facing the core area involved juvenile runaways and unsupervised minors.¹⁰³ Many juveniles "hung out" at the Arcade on the 400 block of Second Avenue. Runaways stayed at the Pioneer Hotel at First and Noble, in apartments above the Comic Shop and in the Northward Building. Juveniles quit school to "work the line."¹⁰⁴ Because of the high wages from the pipeline construction, some juveniles actually made more money than their parents.

Family values became misdirected.¹⁰⁵ Money became the most important value in some homes. Family Focus was created to help runaways and provide them with temporary shelter and help. Crisis Line personnel answered critical calls from those who could not cope with the events of the day and calls from people who just needed someone to talk to.

¹⁰⁰ Dixon, 180.

¹⁰¹ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 24 September 1975.

¹⁰² Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 12 June 1976.

¹⁰³ Dixon, 170.

¹⁰⁴ Dixon, 171.

¹⁰⁵ Dixon, 171-174.

Many natives left their villages and came to Fairbanks to find high paying pipeline jobs. Although there appeared to be a strong effort to hire minorities, the native population did not reap the benefits of the pipeline dollar. Like the Caucasian families, the native families also felt the pressures of pipeline money, or the lack of it. Cultural values were lost for a time, replaced by the bottle of alcohol. Disappointment and anger became common feelings among members of the native community and their frustrations were acted out on the streets of the core-area.

Many native families met in the bars on Second Avenue, while some hired cabs to buy alcohol and deliver it to the apartments at Birch Park. While the families partied, the children were left to run free on Second Avenue and could be found wandering the streets at 3:00 a.m. on any given day.¹⁰⁶ In an attempt to control juveniles' activities in the core area, the City Council proposed a curfew ordinance to apply to persons under age 18, effective from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. in the downtown area.¹⁰⁷

While money became the central value for some, for others the worth of money diminished. Some pipeline workers spent what they had because there was plenty more where that came from. Sadly, along Second Avenue and in the core area the value of life also diminished. Second Avenue became known for its violence. A cocktail waitress was found dead at the Polaris Lounge, a man was stabbed at the Cottage Bar, and so on.¹⁰⁸ These stories struck fear in the citizens and prompted demands to clean up the core area.

Alcohol-induced domestic violence resulted when couples continued family arguments from the bars into their homes. Drunks who "passed out" in the parking lots or near the river banks usually woke up with no wallets or money, as they became prey to robbers and thieves, and some victims never woke up.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Mahler, interview.

¹⁰⁷ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 22 November 1976.

¹⁰⁸ Mahler, interview.

¹⁰⁹ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 12 December 1976.

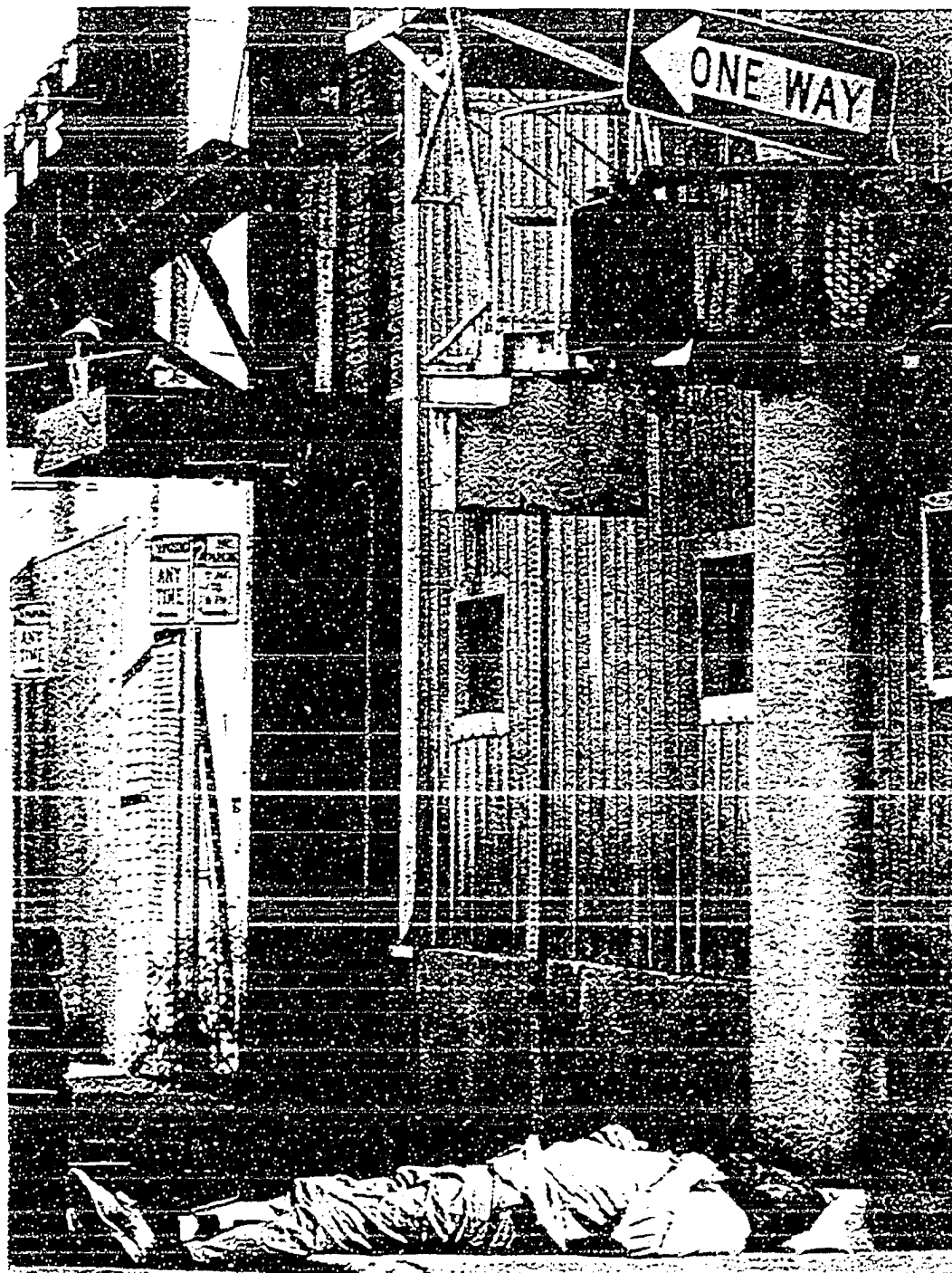


PHOTO 28: Asleep at the Survey. Fairbanks Daily News Miner.

Physical assaults and robbery usually occurred downtown during the early morning hours, in the parking lots, as patrons left the bars. Edgar Ivey was shot in the abdomen, at approximately 2:00 a.m., at the Blanchfield parking lot between First and Second Avenues in a robbery attempt.¹¹⁰ Robert Dempe, an ironworker at Prudhoe Bay, was robbed and beaten to death under the Wendell Street Bridge.¹¹¹

Sexual assaults were not uncommon on the river banks, as drunk females were unable to stop the advances of their attackers. The free-for-all attitude was so rampant that women were sexually assaulted in the bars while other patrons went about their business, ignoring the activity in the bar's corner. The Chena Bar, located in the 400 block of Second Avenue, became infamous for violent sexual activity. Many of the victims were native women who were unable to identify their attackers or who were unwilling to subject themselves to embarrassing questions from insensitive police officers.¹¹²

Offices continued to move out of the core area. The Division of Social Services moved from the Lathrop Building, stating that it was no longer safe for its workers to be downtown. The Post Office attempted to leave the core area, but met great resistance from citizens as well as local government. Safeway moved to Bentley Mall in 1976. The federal offices moved into a new facility at Twelfth and Noble.¹¹³ Citizens took their business out of the core area to Bentley Mall, Gavora Mall, Shoppers Forum, and a variety of mini-malls that cropped up during the pipeline era. Stores once found on Second Avenue moved to the malls, seeking bigger store spaces, modern facilities, and less lawlessness. Slowly, the bars took over the core area.

Crime was not confined to the core area, but much of it originated on Second Avenue. Cab companies became couriers for drugs and prostitution, and the

¹¹⁰ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 27 November 1976.

¹¹¹ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 16 December 1976.

¹¹² Mahler, interview.

¹¹³ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 6 November 1976.

drivers became the targets for murder.¹¹⁴ Many drivers carried guns in their cabs, and cab companies created a new code for cab drivers who found themselves in trouble. The code transmitted over their radio frequencies and relayed to police. The system suffered, however, because of the vigilante mentality of the cab drivers themselves. When the code came over the air, the other cab drivers would respond to the cry for help. Police found themselves chasing the wrong cab and responding to incidents knowing that the cab drivers carried weapons.

By 1975, it had become apparent that the police force was under-manned.¹¹⁵ The police became the targets of the drunken patrons of Second Avenue. In 1973, there were 15 reports of assaults upon police officers; in 1975, 55 assaults upon police. The city government raised salaries of police officers to equal pipeline wages in order to attract qualified applicants.¹¹⁶

Beside dealing with pay increases, the police found themselves under a mandate from the State Human Rights Commission to hire qualified women onto the all-male police force. Three women, Nancy Walczek, Maryann Abernathy, and Marie Scholle, became the first female police officers of the pipeline era. One of their first assignments was foot patrol on Second Avenue from midnight to eight in the morning. It was a difficult time for everyone, but the female officers proved their abilities. Soon other females followed. At one point, the force had five female officers. By 1994, only one remained. Maryann Abernathy left after a few years to take a job as Chief of Security for Gallo Winery in California. Marie Scholle, injured while attempting to arrest a felon in 1982, decided to leave the Police Department in 1985. Nancy Walczek left after seventeen years on the force in order to spend more time with her young children. From 1976 until present day, no female officer has ever been promoted beyond patrol officer.

¹¹⁴ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 20 May 1976.

¹¹⁵ Dixon, 192.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Labor disputes found their way to Fairbanks. The Teamsters Union seemed to be the most violent of the organized labor forces.¹¹⁷ When disputes erupted among labor and trucking companies, professional "troublemakers" from the lower 48 states came to Fairbanks to organize strikes, and soon violence would follow. Labor unions were very strong in Fairbanks. According to Mim Dixon, "Organized labor was so powerful that business did not prosper at the expense of labor--they prospered together."¹¹⁸

Trouble came from within some of the union ranks as well. When workers challenged union bosses, those workers would disappear, later to be found in gold dredges or in the woods. Murders from the pipeline era still remained unsolved. Bodies have yet to be found. Often police identified suspects, but evidence proved scarce. Police arrested one suspect, James McCracken, a warehouseman at the North Star Terminals, for parole violations, but, in essence, they regarded him as the prime suspect for the murders of two high-ranking Fairbanks Teamster officials, Jack "Red" Martin and Harold Pettus.¹¹⁹ Not many murders were solved and taken to trial.

Crime was not the only problem in the core area. Parking space had always been a concern there, and during the 1970s parking spaces for the public became even more limited. Taxi cab companies leased parking spaces, or "cab stands," from the city, and each cab company had its own cab stand areas. Police also obtained designated parking spaces, so officers on foot patrol could readily have a vehicle if they were needed elsewhere.

By 1970, Blanchfield Alley was completely eliminated and made a part of Blanchfield Parking Lot. After the Nordale Hotel burned, the area was cleared and made into Nordale Parking Lot. These parking lots remained full, day and night, until bar closing at 5:00 a.m.

Traffic also seemed to be a major problem throughout the pipeline era. Traffic

¹¹⁷ Anchorage Daily News, 18 December 1975.

¹¹⁸ Dixon, 143.

¹¹⁹ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 7 January 1977.

patterns changed in the core-area, making one-way streets where two-way streets used to be. Tempers became short as drivers waited in long lines at the major intersections. Everywhere you went, there seemed to be a line. Fairbanksans were not used to this. Traffic accidents increased as some pipeline workers were unfamiliar with winter driving, the road conditions, and driving habits of Fairbankans.¹²⁰ Table 6 illustrates the increase in the accident rate in Fairbanks from 1973 to 1975.

TABLE 6

| Auto Accidents in Fairbanks - 1973 to 1975* | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 | Percent Change 1973-1975 |
| Number of Accidents | 1,149 | 1,366 | 1,906 | +66% |
| Number of Vehicles involved | 2,125 | 2,389 | 3,640 | +71% |
| Number of Persons Injured | 179 | 203 | 353 | +97% |
| Number of Persons Killed | 3 | 1 | 1 | -66% |
| Total Dollar Loss | \$493,244 | \$857,737 | \$1,999,555 | +305% |
| Average Dollar Loss Per Vehicle | \$232 | \$359 | \$549 | +137% |

* Figures taken from Fairbanks Police Department reports, 1973-1975.

Another problem that surfaced was the air quality during the winter months. Mim Dixon described traffic in this manner: "Traffic in Fairbanks is more closely related to quality of life than in many small towns because, despite its image as a frontier town,

¹²⁰ Dixon, 18.

Fairbanks has severe air quality problems.”¹²¹ Temperature inversions caused the exhaust fumes from vehicles to remain in the air close to the ground instead of escaping into the atmosphere. The elderly especially suffered ill-effects as congestion in the core area increased this “ice fog,” since the housing for the elderly was located in the core area at Third and Noble. Most of the elderly citizens had to walk to the grocery store or other shops, and the fumes caused breathing difficulties.

The residents of Fairbanks were not the only people to change their way of life during the pipeline years. The businessmen of the community suddenly found themselves in a position to make huge profits from their inventories.¹²² Prices for goods and services doubled, and housing and office rents took on a different dimension. Garages were converted to living quarters and rented for \$500 or more per month. According to Mix Dixon, Don Gilmer described the attitude of the business community in this way:

I am concerned about the greed that this community is showing and that greed is probably worst in the people who have been here the longest....It's not the pipeliners, it's not the newcomers, its the people who have been here 5, 10, 15, 20 years. There are prices being charged here now that have no reason to be charged except for the lack of competition.¹²³

The business community, through its large, well-funded Chamber of Commerce, defended its business practices, stating that the community did not understand the principles of business. They alluded to the fact that government agencies still employed many local people, and because these agencies didn't have to make a profit to continue, their employees had no concept of how private enterprise operated. The Chamber of Commerce was a strong and organized group with a large membership and large funding sources.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Dixon, 115.

¹²² Dixon, 19.

¹²³ Dixon, 141.

¹²⁴ Dixon, 142.

If a person couldn't afford a place to rent, then he or she could buy a tent and lease a piece of ground on which to erect the tent. Some people just put up tents in nearby woods and lived there until the police forced them to leave.¹²⁵ The Salvation Army and the Rescue Mission provided places where a person could go to find a place to sleep for the night. Limits were set for the length of time a person was allowed to stay.

Inadequate housing represented only a part of the problem. The value of human life diminished during the pipeline era. Fairbanks lost its innocence and sense of community. Second Avenue of old was forever changed.

¹²⁵ Mahler, interview.

POST-PIPELINE FAIRBANKS - THE 1980s

The pipeline construction ended in the late 1970s. When the pipeliners departed, only run-down bars, drunks staggering down the street from one bar to the next, and men and women with broken dreams, broken families, and empty wallets remained in the core area.

Those who had purchased homes during the peak years of the pipeline now faced large mortgages with smaller incomes. For some, the burden was too great, and they were forced to leave their residences. Some people sold their homes at a substantially reduced rate, asking buyers just to take over the mortgage payments with little or nothing in down payment. Even with that incentive, many could not sell their homes. These individuals filed for bankruptcy or just walked away from their residences. Some of them went back to the lower 48 states to start over. This left a dilemma for local banks, many of which held mortgages that had become default loans.

Businessmen found themselves in similar quandaries. Stores created during the pipeline days paid high rent to the malls where they were located. Now customer traffic fell off, and marginal stores could no longer afford to stay in business. Those businesses that had left the core area for the greener pastures of the malls now faced a major famine. Businessmen could not look to their friendly bankers for help, because the banking industry was over-extended.

The 1980s became a time for rebuilding. Individuals had to rebuild their family lives and their careers. The core area faced trying to rebuild its once robust business district. In July, 1980, City Ordinance Number 3960 created the Fairbanks Development Authority to stimulate business development by providing for "ongoing and concerted efforts to revitalize the physical and economical conditions of the downtown area of the city at large by means of the deliberate formation of private-public reinvestment and new investment programs."¹²⁶ The Fairbanks Development Authority concept came from a Title 9 Study on Economic Development, a federal study conducted in the late 1970s to address

¹²⁶ Patricia Olds. Rehab Program (Fairbanks: Fairbanks Development Authority, n.d.), 1.

the economic needs of the Fairbanks area.¹²⁷ The five-member Board of the Fairbanks Development Authority (FDA) had the task of securing available federal and state grants to bring economic life to Second Avenue. They were instructed to concentrate their efforts on the core area for the first two years and then expand their efforts to the rest of the city.

The board members believed that their quest for a “new” downtown area should start with construction of a new hotel to be located on Second Avenue. They purchased many of the bar locations on First and Second Avenues and had the buildings removed to make way for the planned hotel. By 1984, seven firms had expressed interest in building a large hotel/garage complex, but only two firms, Cosmos Group and Marubeni Group, appeared to have adequate financial backing to complete the project.¹²⁸ The Fairbanks Development Authority remained so sure that a hotel would be built, that they refused to allow local businesses to rent or lease their properties for temporary business ventures in order to save the land for the new hotel.¹²⁹

The hotel project soon fell apart. Both hotel groups expressed concerns about the possibility of a conflict with a proposed new community center. They worried that there would be duplication of facilities offered at each site. In a letter to the City Council, FDA Executive Director, Woody Maggard, Jr., wrote:

Due to the high costs associated with building in Fairbanks, the overall economics of the project have appeared marginal from the perspective of attracting sufficient equity investment. Hotels are considered to be the most risky of all real estate projects and are the most complex.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Ruth Burnette, interview by author, at Fairbanks, Alaska, 12 February 1996.

¹²⁸ Fairbanks Development Authority meeting minutes, 9 August 1984, Fairbanks Development Authority Collection, Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska. Hereafter cited as “FDA.”

¹²⁹ Fairbanks Development Authority meeting minutes, 12 April 1984, FDA.

¹³⁰ FDA to the Mayor of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks City Council, 27 September, 1984, FDA.

TABLE 7

| FAIRBANKS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY PROPERTY LIST | |
|--|--|
| Time of Purchase/Lease | Property Description |
| 1981 - 1983 | 101 Cushman, Pastime Cafe |
| | 500 Block Second Avenue |
| | Carousel Building |
| | Arctic Bar |
| | Riverside Bar |
| | Zales Building |
| | Flame Lounge |
| | Chena Building |
| | Lathrop Building |
| | Lacey Street Theater |
| 1982 | 543 First Avenue |
| 1983 | 576 First Avenue, USO Building |
| 1984 - 1985 | Fox Building |
| | First and Lacey Streets |
| | Lots 6C through E, behind Fox Building |

Source: Minutes and documents, FDA.

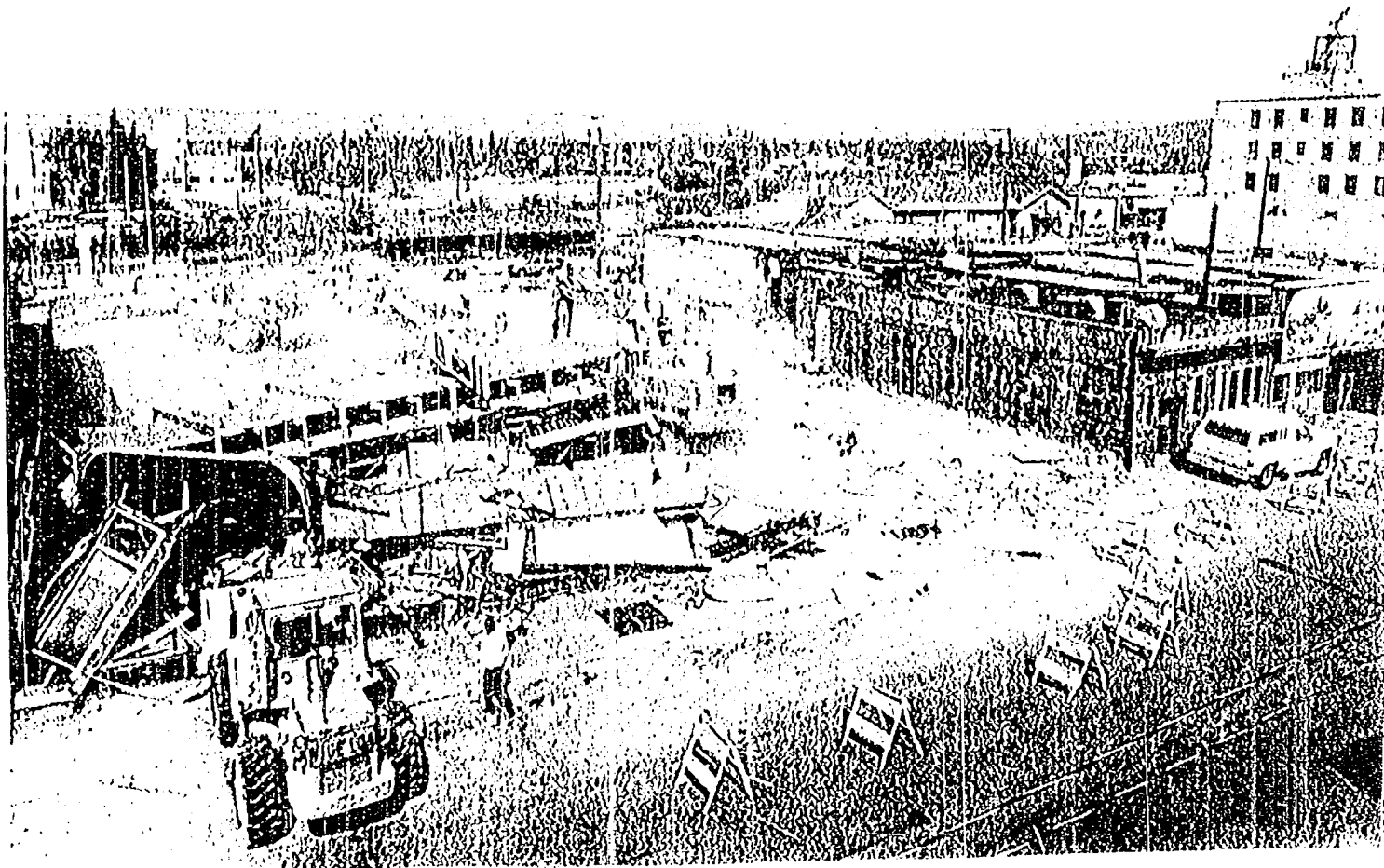


PHOTO 2.9: Destruction of the Bar Block in Downtown Fairbanks, Alaska. Fairbanks Daily News Miner.

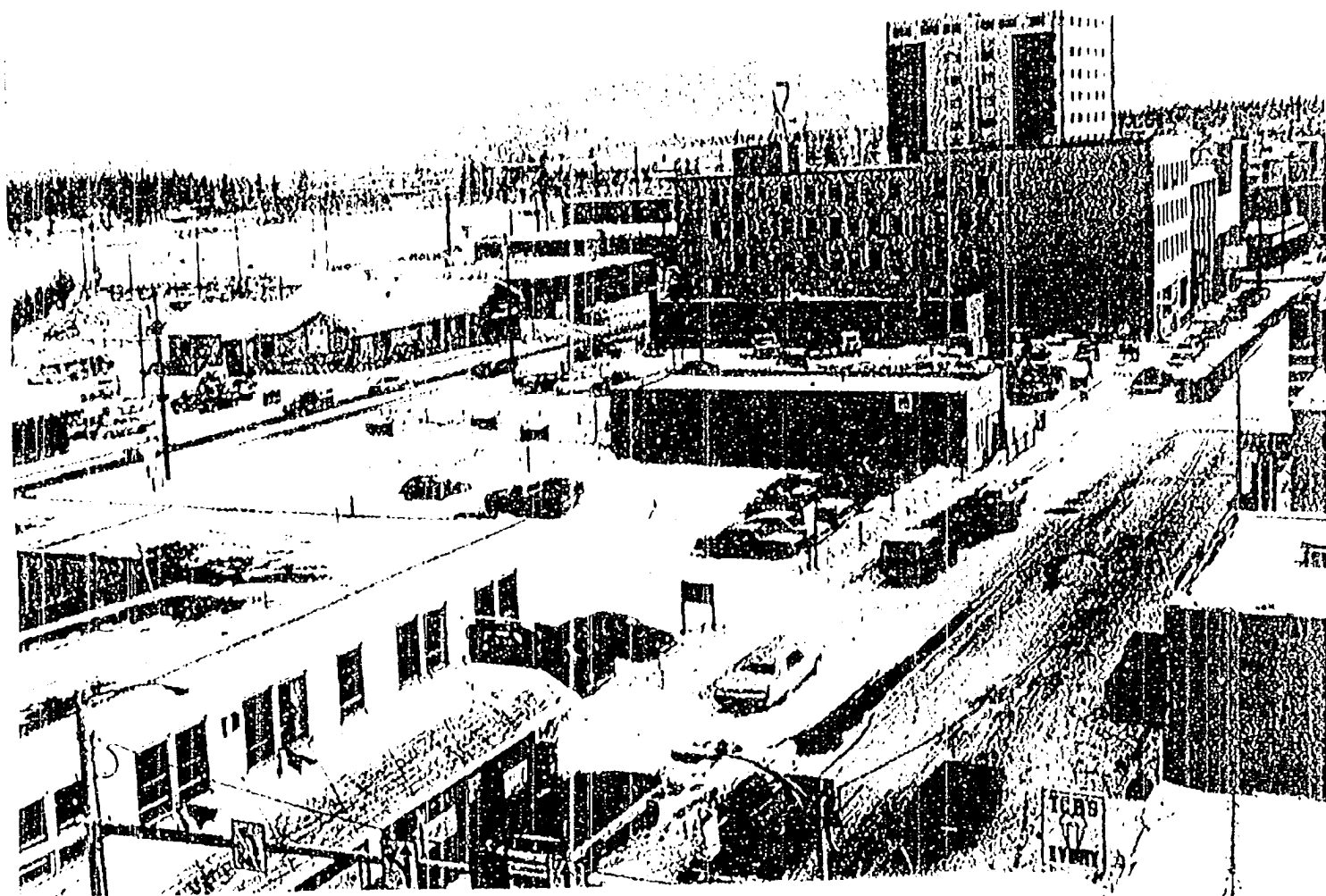


PHOTO 30: Second Avenue Parking Lots in Downtown Fairbanks, Alaska 1980s.
Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 1980.

In December, 1984, the Cosmos Group withdrew its offer to build the hotel, and by July, 1986, the Fairbanks Development Authority broke its ties with the Marubeni Group when they realized that the group's financial status had changed due to the drop in oil prices.¹³¹ The core area now contained vacant lots and despair over the loss of the hotel. That despair soon turned to anger, and the question of whether to keep the Fairbanks Development Authority arose. The Authority continued to work on attracting business prospects. They obtained money to replace the USO building with the Golden Heart Park and secured funding to help renovate the federal building at Second and Cushman. In spite of their best efforts, other organizations felt they could do the job better.

Those other downtown groups went to work on projects of their own. Main Street Fairbanks, headed by Karen Lavery, began the work of giving the core area a face-lift. She solicited help from local unions and core area businesses, and the old buildings received fresh paint. Flower boxes appeared around the parking areas and in front of store windows.¹³²

The Downtown Association of Fairbanks also looked for ways to encourage shoppers to come back to the core area. According to Ruth Brunette, the Downtown Association was the political foe of the Fairbanks Development Authority, and Downtown Association members criticized every attempt the Fairbanks Development Authority made to enhance the core area.¹³³

With all this interest and so little funding, each group competed against the others for the limited state and federal funding available. Althea St. Martin, who worked for the Chamber of Commerce during the 1980s, stated that one of the primary reasons for the lack of advancement in the core area was the political in-fighting among the core area groups. Each entity had its pet projects and refused to work with the other groups.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Fairbanks Development Authority meeting minutes, 21 December 1984, FDA.

¹³² Lavery, interview.

¹³³ Ruth Burnett, interview by author, at Fairbanks, 12 February 1996.

¹³⁴ Althea St. Martin, interview by author, 25 September 1993.

Each group's representative flew to Juneau to solicit funding from legislators for their own projects. The fragmented efforts to enhance the core area of Fairbanks failed to achieve a positive result:

Public leaders were too busy disagreeing on whose priorities should be represented....One of the results of the earlier lack of foresight and cooperation is the urban distress and decay that we see around us now; insufficient, diversified economic development, decaying or missing portions of the infra-structure, empty and dilapidated buildings....¹³⁵

The core-area continued to lose businesses, and the tax base continued to decline. By the end of the 1980s, Hoyts Jewelers, a local family business, moved to Seattle.¹³⁶ Star of the North Bakery sold its store, which eventually failed. And the Co-Op Drug Store, a very old and well-known establishment, closed its doors citing poor economic conditions.¹³⁷ The core-area seemed to be dying, and all the planning and hoping could not stop the continued economic decay.

Retail businesses were not the only victims of a depressed economy. Partially because of poor loan practices, the banks began to fail. Some of the oldest banks in Fairbanks closed their doors forever. Alaska National Bank, with its main office in the Northward Building, closed its doors in October of 1987.¹³⁸ Frontier Savings and Loan had a very brief history at Fourth and Cushman. Alaska State Bank, located in the 600 block of Fifth Avenue across from J. C. Penny's Department Store, also terminated its business activities. First National Bank of Fairbanks sold out to Key Bank Corporation, and William Stroecker announced his retirement. The new bank remained in the same location at Second and Cushman. National Bank of Alaska survived the banking crisis and

¹³⁵ Application for Federal Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community Designation, Main Street Fairbanks, 1994, 14. Document in author's possession.

¹³⁶ Betty Milliken, interview by author, Fairbanks, Alaska, 18 December 1995.

¹³⁷ Lavery, interview.

¹³⁸ Olivia Phillips, interview by author, Fairbanks, Alaska, 21 February 1996.

purchased the assets of Alaska National Bank, closing its main office in the Northward Building. Mt. McKinley Bank, located at the 500 block of Third Avenue, also survived. Its prudent, conservative loan practices during the 1970s proved to be its saving grace in the 1980s.

The bank failures were not unique to Alaska. Banks in the lower 48 states were failing as well, due, in part, to mismanagement or embezzlement and also due to a slowed economy.¹³⁹ The eastern part of the United States suffered a serious economic depression as manufacturers and management companies moved west where taxes were lower and office rents cheaper.¹⁴⁰ The Joseph Mollicone embezzlement from the Heritage Bank in Rhode Island forced Governor Bruce Sundlun to close all the state banks, which caused a wave of financial collapses in New England. In Fairbanks, loan defaults and poor investments rather than embezzlements caused the banks to fail.

Citizens who remained in Fairbanks after the whirlwind of the pipeline era faced economic hard times. People now faced mounting debts and had to account for "all that money they made." "What happened to all the money I made on the slope?" became a popular question as people regretted their free-spending habits of the 1970s. Some residents suddenly stopped their fast paced lifestyles and looked around to find themselves with no job, no money, and for some, no family. Domestic violence and divorce became increased during the 1980s as individuals were forced to face the reality of their past mistakes.¹⁴¹ Bumper stickers appeared on cars with the phrase, "Lord give us another pipeline and we promise not to throw it away."

City government also felt the pinch. Money from the state coffers dwindled, and decisions made during pipeline construction, such as the suspension of city sales tax and changes in collective bargaining with the Police and Fire Department Associations and local unions, began to take their toll on the city budget. Fairbanks faced paying "pipeline

¹³⁹ Providence Journal Bulletin, 5 March 1996.

¹⁴⁰ Bernard Beauregard, telephone interview by author, Lincoln, Rhode Island, 8 March 1996.

¹⁴¹ Dixon, 203.

wages" during a time of economic depression. The city wanted to raise taxes to cover the mounting debts, but the newly formed Interior Taxpayers Association rallied city voters against any tax hike. A proposed sales tax went down in defeat at the polls, and the tax base of the core area weakened as more buildings were converted into parking lots.

The core area did remain a social center for the community as the Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race and the North American Sled Dog Championships used Second Avenue as their starting gates. The Golden Days parade still traveled down Noble Street to Second Avenue and on to Alaskaland. Tourists still came to the core area in an attempt to see the things they read or heard about from pipeline lore. However, the tour companies still refused to drive their clients downtown. Some small shops remained in the Federal Building at Second and Cushman, and parts of the 500 block of Second Avenue housed small stores and eating establishments. The University of Alaska opened a branch in the Chena Building, and Festival '84 (now Festival Fairbanks) opened its office in the Lathrop Building. Under the leadership of Dr. William Wood, the Cushman Street bridge became the "Avenue of Flags." Jinx Whitaker converted the Drop-In Center, used to house drunk individuals from the core-area during the pipeline days, into Horizon Galleries.

By the end of the 1980s, it became vividly clear to the core area merchants that the Fairbanks Development Authority failed in its attempt to attract big business. FDA, too, fell victim to a sluggish economy and a barrage of political attacks from core area business groups. Their ideas for big business did not keep up with the reality of a battered Fairbanks economy. Some programs of the 1980s did bring in enough money to upgrade utilities in the core area. However, the vacant lots remained empty, the tax coffers dwindled, and the Fairbanks Development Authority was about to fade away as the 1990s drew near.

FAIRBANKS OF THE 90s

The Fairbanks Development Authority really never recovered from the hotel debacle. In May, 1992, Urban Design students from the University of Washington came to Fairbanks to study the potential economic value of the river frontage to the core area. Two of the students in the group became very critical of the Fairbanks Development Authority. In a letter to FDA Executive Director Dee Lashbrook, Ken Alper stated:

Despite wide variation of opinion as to what would promote community, revitalize downtown, meet social and cultural needs--despite all these disparate opinions, all, 100% of the people we spoke to had strong reservations about the FDA and the role they have played, and the methods they have utilized in furtherance of their ostensible mission...many important people downtown in fields as diverse as social services, commercial enterprise, entertainment, communications, and government--question the ability of the FDA to meet their needs. You are viewed to varying degrees as outsiders (non-city people), people with little regard for the needs of the present users of downtown, people with unchecked powers, etc.¹⁴²

The Fairbanks Development Authority became a target of the Interior Taxpayers Association, a politically strong anti-tax group. The Downtown Association also failed to support the Authority. Under mounting pressure, the Fairbanks Development once more attempted to gain favor with the core area occupants. They purchased the lot where the Savoy Bar, R. J.'s Bar, and several vacant buildings were located. The Savoy Bar, a sub-standard building that, at one time, housed transients upstairs, had become an "eye sore" to the core area and harbored "Second Avenue drunks." The purchase became entangled in a web of law suits when the Fairbanks Development Authority claimed that they accidentally had overpaid the owners and they wanted their money back. Many, regarded this as more evidence of mismanagement by the Fairbanks Development Authority. During the week of November 16, 1992, the City Council voted to disband the

¹⁴² Ken Alper to Dee Lashbrook, 20 May 1992. Document in author's possession.

Fairbanks Development Authority and assume the assets and liabilities of the group.¹⁴³ The vote ended the ten year reign of the FDA but the effects of its tenure continue to haunt the core area in the form of vacant lots and broken dreams.

After the demise of the FDA, the local merchants began to take back the ownership of the core area. The University of Alaska decided to move its Tanana Valley Campus to the Chena Building to accommodate part-time and continuing education students. Nick Stepovich, a member of a well known and respected Fairbanks family, took over the Star of the North Bakery building and opened a restaurant called Soapy Smith's. Alaska native groups opened a native gift shop and tour companies opened small shops in the summer for the tourist trade. Federal offices came back to the refurbished Federal courthouse building at Second and Cushman, and a new group, known as the Riverfront Commission, is looking at ways to utilize the Chena River frontage to economic feasibility.

On the social scene, the Yukon Quest still provides the beginning or ending of the Yukon Quest sled dog races in the core-area and the North American Sled Dog races also take center stage in Fairbanks in March. Golden Days activities lure visitors down to the core-area in July, and the Fiddlers Festival brings many native families to the core-area during the week-long event.

¹⁴³ Fairbanks Daily News Miner, 20-21 November 1992.

CONCLUSION

When did Second Avenue begin the change from the economic mainstay of Fairbanks to a deserted and crime ridden area? From the beginning of Fairbanks in 1906 until approximately 1960, citizens and the local government took the role of "promoting economic growth and the generation of wealth." After 1960, however, the local government assumed the role of "caretaker."¹⁴⁴ Local government maintained traditional services and perceived itself as conservative, not very innovative and reluctant to do more than maintaining existing services. History shows that Fairbanks had not been a planned city, with zoning laws and pre-determined areas set aside for businesses and residences. The core area was the center of Fairbanks.

During the 1950s, the Planning and Zoning Commission decided to change the ways of the past and attempted to restrict business activity to the core on the premise that because of harsh weather conditions, the businesses needed to be in one area where citizens could take care of their shopping needs in a compact setting. But increased traffic in the core area, shattered the intent of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Increased traffic meant decreased parking availability and poor air quality in the winter months.

Piggly Wiggly Super Market moved to the site which is now Gavora Mall. However, the first major blow to the core area came with the construction of the Foodland Shopping Center in 1961.¹⁴⁵ The City Council attempted to condemn some of the older buildings in the core area but failed due to pressure from business owners downtown.¹⁴⁶ Instead of re-investing and/or rebuilding, the existing businesses just repainted or resurfaced the exteriors. When the City Council began to condemn substandard residential structures, they forced the lower income families who lived at these residences away from

¹⁴⁴ J. Rogers Hollingworth and Ellen Jane Hollingsworth, Dimensions in Urban History, Historical and Social Science Perspectives on Middle-Size American Cities (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 44-48.

¹⁴⁵ Harry "Red" Porter, interview by author, at Fairbanks, Alaska, 26 February 1996.

¹⁴⁶ Pioneer All-Alaska Weekly, 18 February 1972.

the core area. No new low income housing units replaced the dwellings that had been destroyed. By 1963, the tax assessors indicated that, based on real estate sales, the core area was moving toward Airport Way and Gaffney Road.¹⁴⁷ The 1967 flood caused its own urban renewal of Second Avenue. Some of old substandard structures could not be saved, and those that remained were salvaged with money from federal grants and loans provided to rebuild Fairbanks.

The efforts of the City Council and the business associations came too late to save the core area. With Foodland operating on Gaffney Road, a new Goldstream Theater opening on Airport Way, and the Sanfair Bakery operating at Airport and Barnette, a new business district began to form. With the opening of Gavora Mall in 1972 and construction of a new Safeway store at University Avenue, it became apparent that the easy parking and shopping convenience replaced the parking fight of Second Avenue.

The pipeline era proved to be "the straw that broke the camel's back." The only customers to venture to downtown were pipeliners down from Prudhoe Bay or tourists who wanted to witness the prostitutes working on the street corners or the drunks passed out on the streets.

Out of the ashes of the past, a new core-area is emerging. Honoring its heritage, Second Avenue is driving to a new future. The intents are to preserve history, not destroy it; to develop a tourist and local trade which is not in direct competition with the large mall groups; to cater to the individual's curiosity, not simply to push a large quantity of goods out the door.

Businessmen, government entities and citizens of the core area have designed projects which closely follow the recommendations found in the blueprint for American cities as described by Charles Abrams in The City is a Frontier.¹⁴⁸ Charles Abrams describes various methods for the re-establishment of an inner city. Business and government must work to make the city more attractive for tourism. Fairbanks has

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Charles Abrams, The City is The Frontier (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 289-337.

attempted to do that in the form of the Avenue of Flags, the Golden Heart Park, even the flower boxes placed in front of store windows. The citizens' groups and government must use the natural beauty to its potential. The Riverfront Commission is working to make something of the riverfront properties, obtaining money for bike trails, and a boat dock at Golden Heart Park. Another recommendation by Abrams is to refurbish the buildings. Businesses have begun reinvesting in the core area. Jinx Whitaker refurbished the old Drop In Center and made it an art gallery. Gold Rush Jewelers built a new store front, Co-Op Drugs is now Co-Op Plaza, and other buildings have received fresh coats of paint. Abrams also wrote about adding to the area, not destroying it. Although many buildings have been torn down, there is still many historic buildings that are now being preserved.

Another point in Abram's book was to utilize the downtown as an adult learning center. In Fairbanks, the University of Alaska refurbished part of the Chena/Lathrop Building for classrooms for the Tanana Valley College.

The Borough government has made the core area more accessible by providing mass transportation. The bus terminal is located on Fifth and Cushman, within walking distance of the core area.

The police department established a sub-station in the core area to assist citizens while shopping downtown. With citizen volunteers, foot patrols have been established during the shopping hours in order to provide a sense of security for women and children in the core area.

Finally, Abrams suggest that the businessmen, the government and the citizens must be given a sense of ownership. Local Fairbanks businesses have taken ownership of the core. Main Street Fairbanks, headed by Karen Lavery, has taken a very active role in the revitalization of the core area. Karen has a sense of ownership because her family owned a business in the core area for many years and she still owns property on Second Avenue.

And the citizens of Fairbanks took ownership of Second Avenue when they came to the core area to tear down the historic Savoy Bar and replace it with another parking lot. The building needed to go, but there is an important meaning to this venture. It was "citizens," not government, who took the initiative to clean up the area. With the closing of the Savoy

Bar, another “eye-sore” was removed from downtown, and the Savoy Bar patrons were forced to find another hang-out away from the sight of the public.

The key to a successful core area must come from the merchants themselves. Business owners must reinvest their profits to upgrade the existing structures and make them more attractive to the consumer. They must be able to answer the question, “Why would I want to go downtown?” With small, unique shops and a friendly atmosphere, customers will return to explore the core area. A dinner theater at the old Lacey Street Theater could bring citizens to the core area to see a play during the evening hours. Professional offices would bring clientele that would support the restaurants in the core area during the day. Social events will also enhance the excitement of the Central Business District. To give the core area historical atmosphere, street lighting could be changed. Street lights similar to those used in downtown Juneau would enhance the early Fairbanks motif. The core area need to be fun for the visitor. People are always looking for something to do, something to see. The core area businesses could create an “Alaskaland” on Second Avenue. Somewhere on Second Avenue, there should be a museum similar to the museum in Dawson, Yukon Territory, that depicts the early days of Second Avenue and its importance to the city.

Preparing this thesis has been an exciting experience. One can look at Second Avenue in 1996 and still see the core area of the 1920s. The key to selling the core area is to sell its history. People want to know about the social and economic importance of Second Avenue and the core area.

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APPENDIX A

THE FOLLOWING RULES BECOME EFFECTIVE AS OF THIS DATE AND ANY AND ALL PERSONS WORKING ON THE "LINE" WILL HAVE TO ADHERE STRICTLY TO THESE POLICIES HEREWITH SET OUT OR BE SUBJECT TO PENALTY:

1. Operators will not, under any circumstances, be permitted to frequent any taverns or any hotels at any time, within the corporate limits of the Town of Fairbanks.
2. No one, other than the operator herself, or a person making legitimate deliveries of food or merchandise, shall be permitted to use the front door as a means of exit or entry.
3. Between the hours of 9 P.M. and 6 A.M. only the operator and one (1) person who is there for business shall be permitted in any house at any time; unless a state of emergency exists, wherein prior permission has been given by the Chief of Police.
4. Known "pimps" and men friends of operators will be prosecuted, as well as the operator, if found loitering at the line.
5. The rear light at each house shall be kept burning at ALL times during hours of darkness whether the operator is away or otherwise, and necessary arrangements shall be made to see that this is done if premises are to be vacated at intervals.
6. Each operator will furnish the office of the Chief of Police, in person, on Wednesday of each week, with a properly executed slide or smear test bearing negative results from a licensed physician or registered nurse. 6 P.M. is the deadline.
7. Each operator will furnish the office of the Chief of Police a blood test bearing negative results at least once every three months, and the burden of these tests being taken at the proper time shall rest with each operator.
8. Any new operator intending to work shall first report to the office of the Chief of Police and furnish necessary personal information. They shall then, if permitted to work, furnish a negative smear test of current date and also take a blood test. In addition, they shall furnish to the office of the Chief of Police three pictures of themselves and submit to fingerprints within ten days of their entry to the line.

9. Any operator who leaves the line for any reason such as trips outside, vacations, or otherwise, shall report date of departure and date of return to the office of the Chief of Police.
10. Any operator found in a state of intoxication during working hours, namely (9 P.M. to 6 A.M.), if such place is being inhabited by any customer, will be arrested and charged.
11. It will be the personal responsibility of each operator to see that premises are kept clean and in a sanitary condition, as well as any adjacent buildings that go with that property, such as wood shed, front, coal bin, store rooms, etc.
12. During working hours all windows and doors and openings on Fourth Street shall at all times be properly shaded to prohibit any vision into the premises by persons passing by.
13. All operators shall admit any officer to the premises at any time during the day or night, immediately upon being informed that the officer desires admittance in the line of duty.
14. Beginning June 1st, 1945, at each and every month thereafter, each operator shall personally appear between the 1st and 10th of each month and will be charged with VAGRANCY and assessed a fine of \$50.00. A receipt will be issued to each operator and an official entry made each time in the Police Register.

George N. Norton
Chief of Police

Source: Alaska State Library, Alaska Historical Collection. Juneau, Alaska. May 16, 1945.

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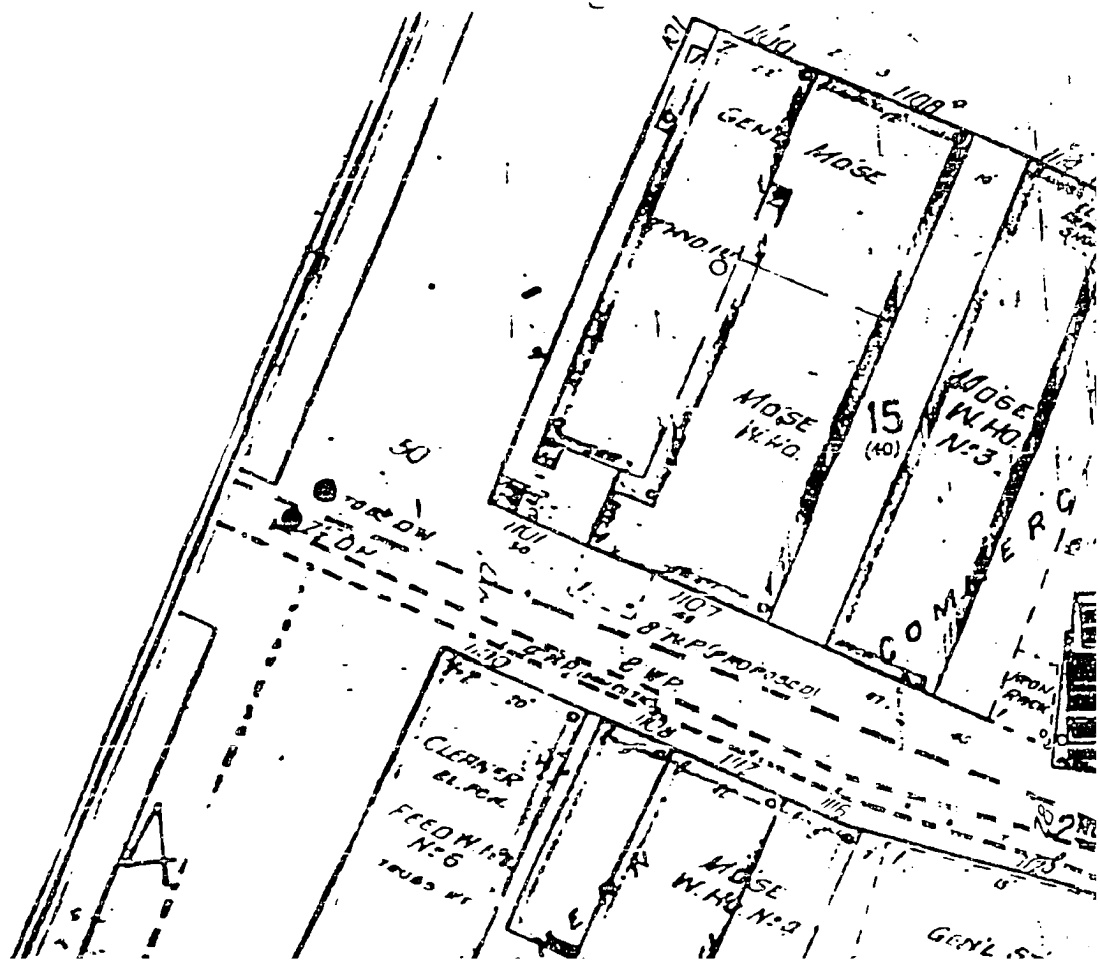
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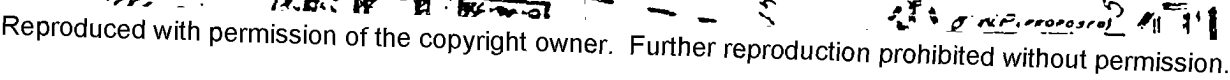
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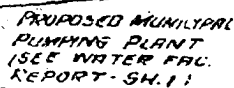
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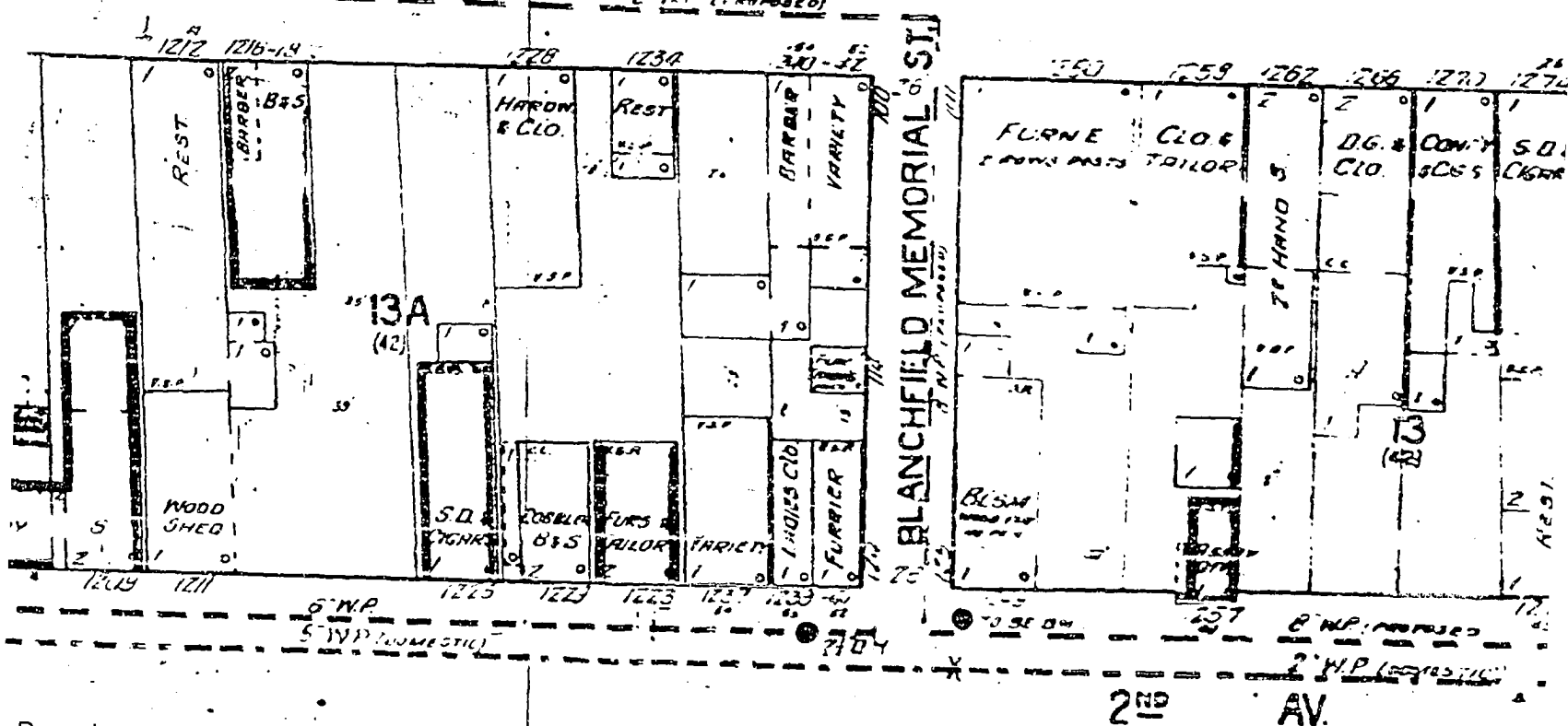
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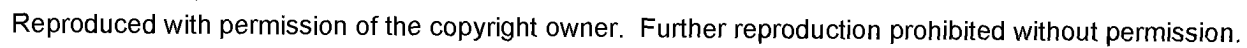


**FAIRVIEW
HOTEL**
ST. M. IT

TO BE D.H.

1ST AV.





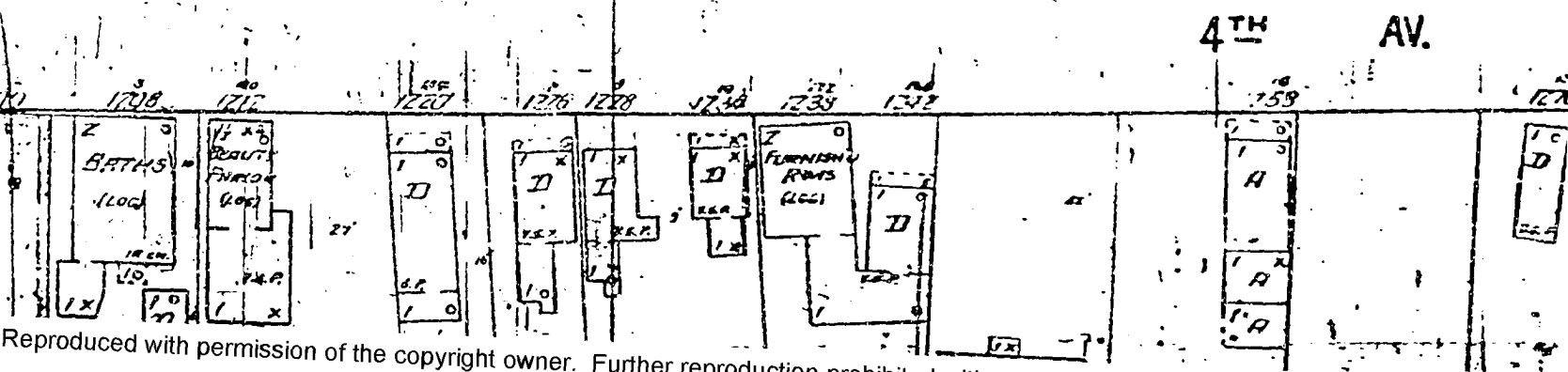
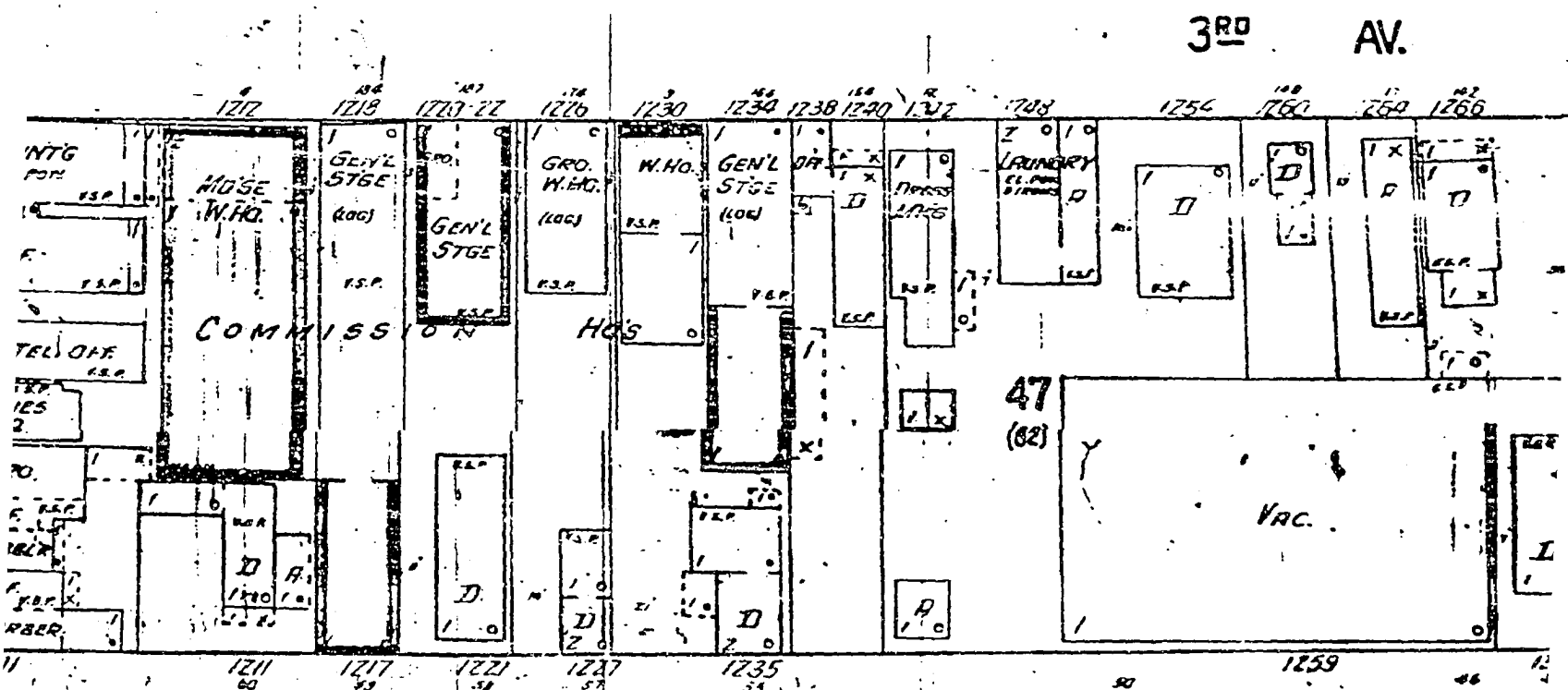
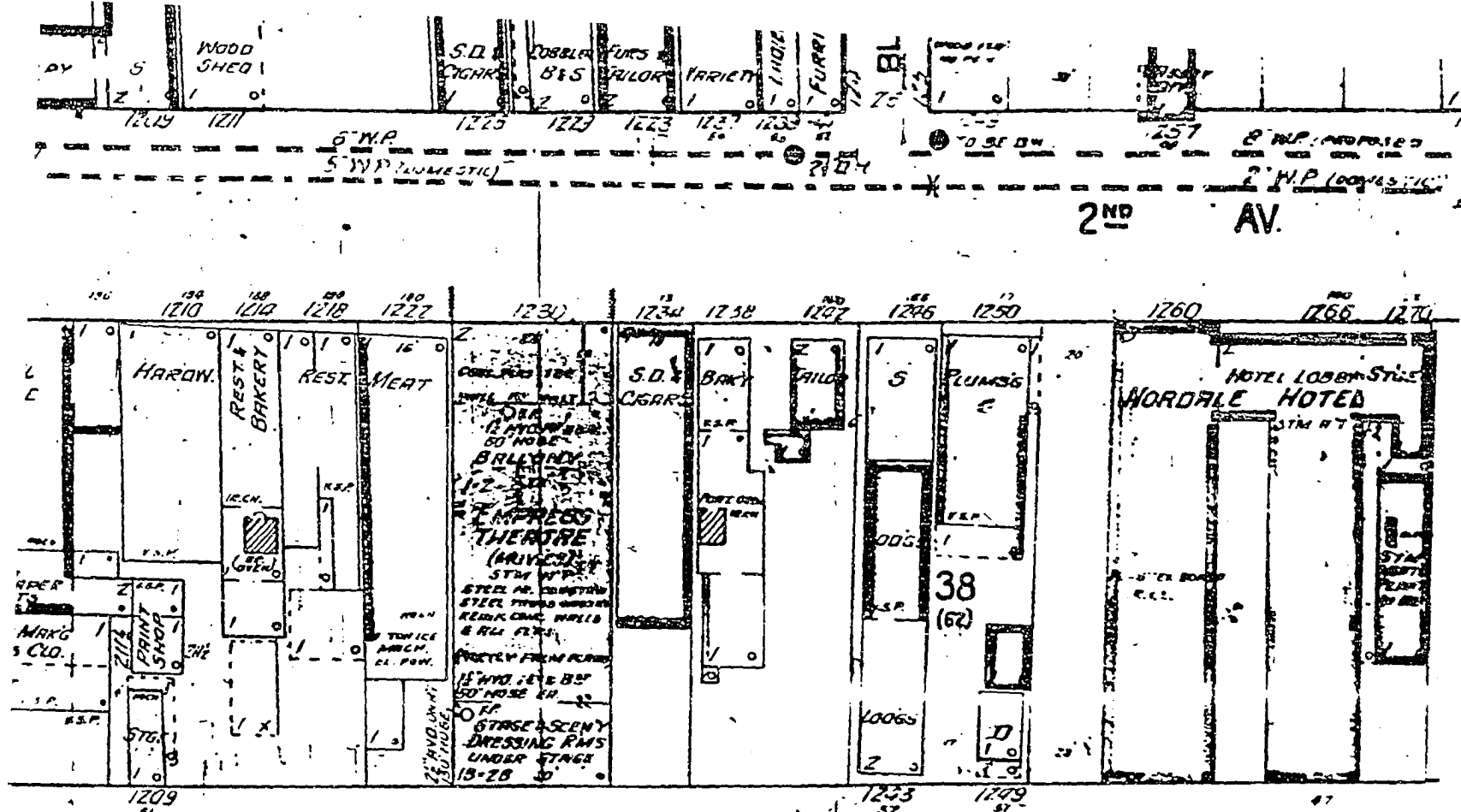


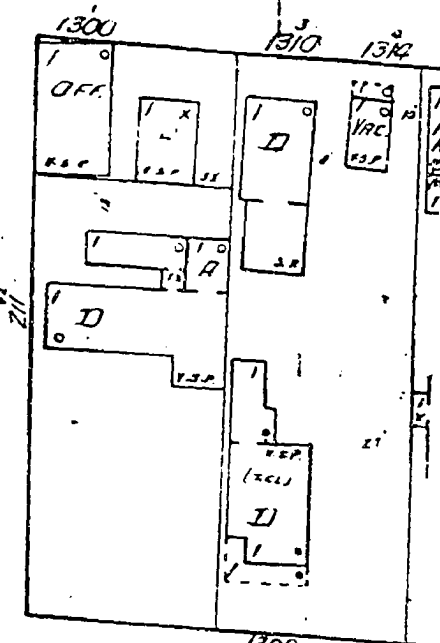
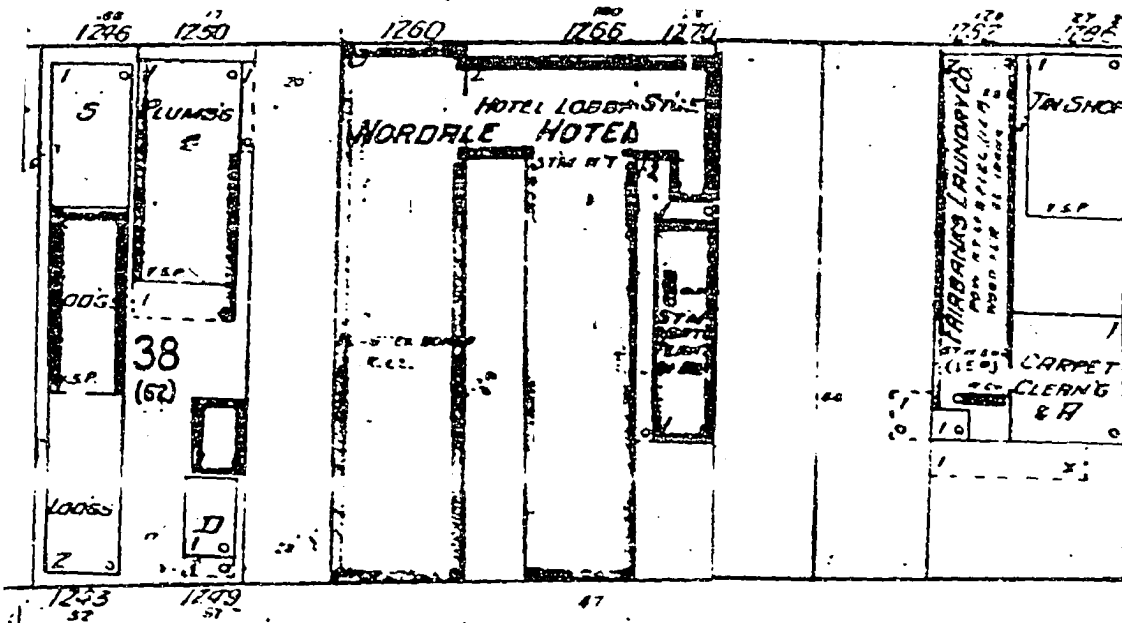
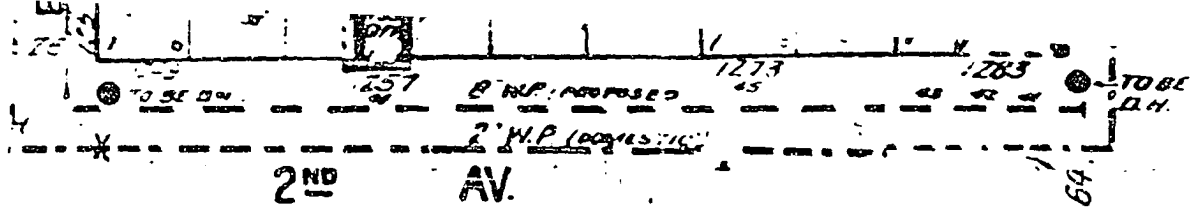
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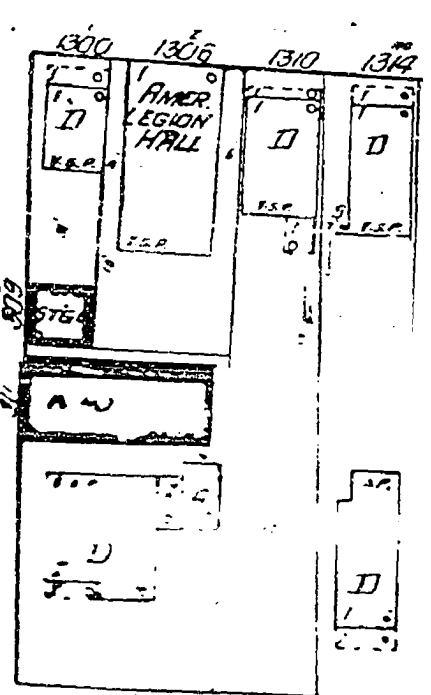
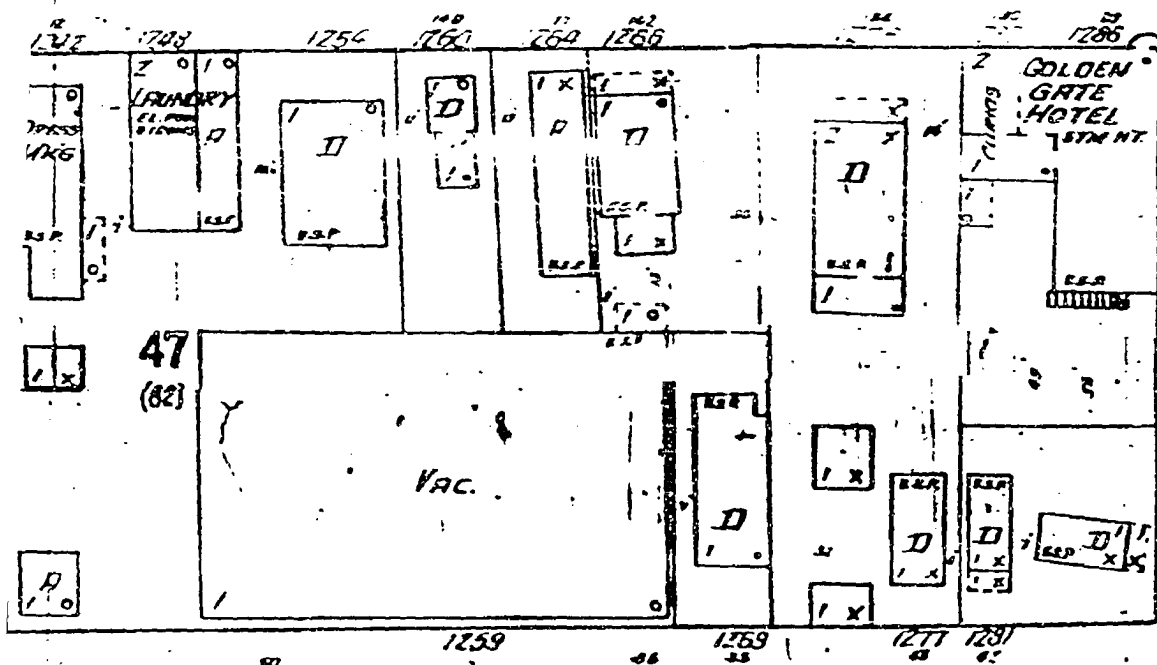
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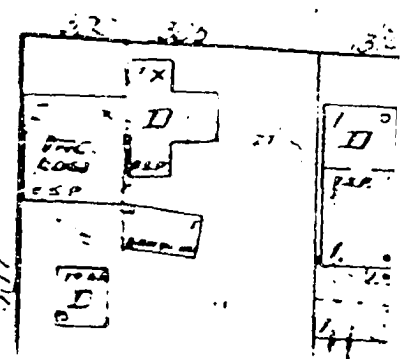
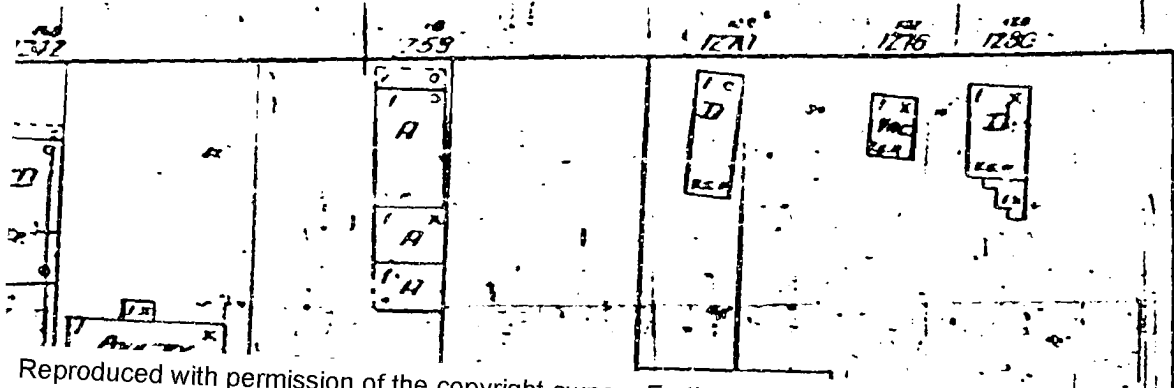


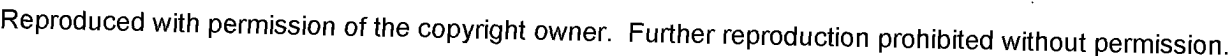
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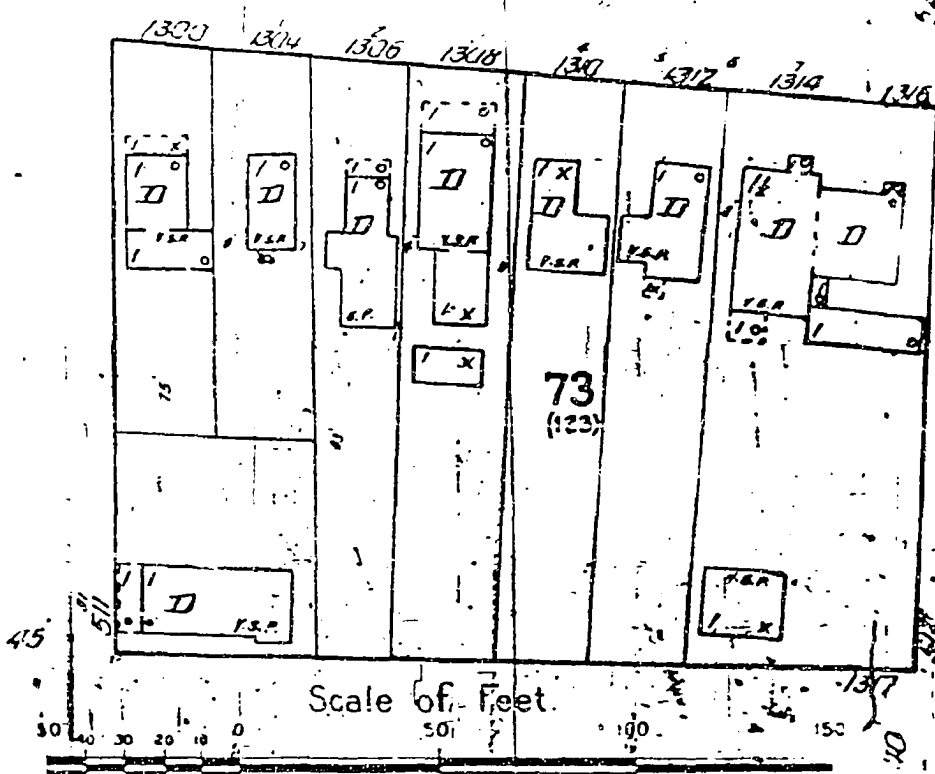
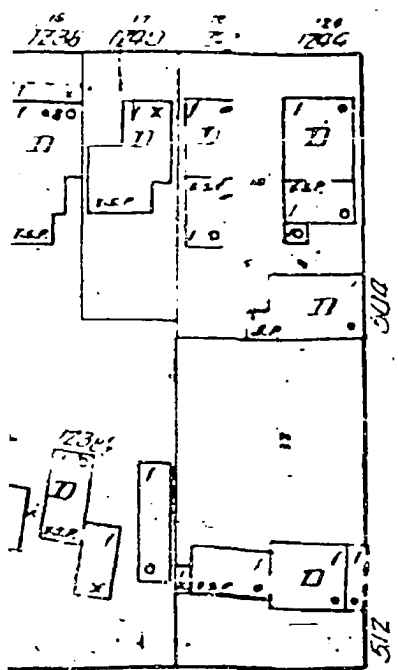
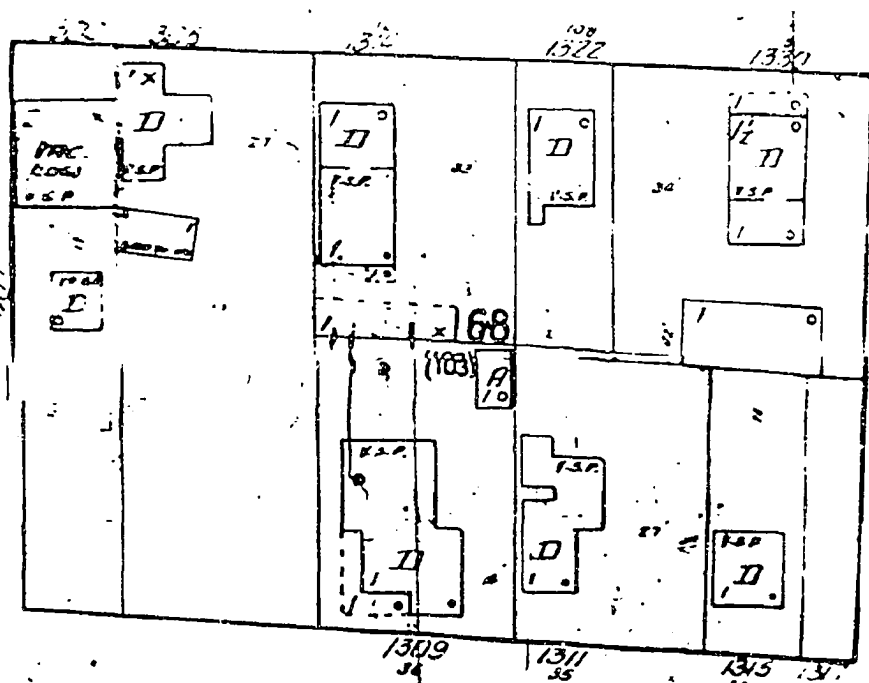
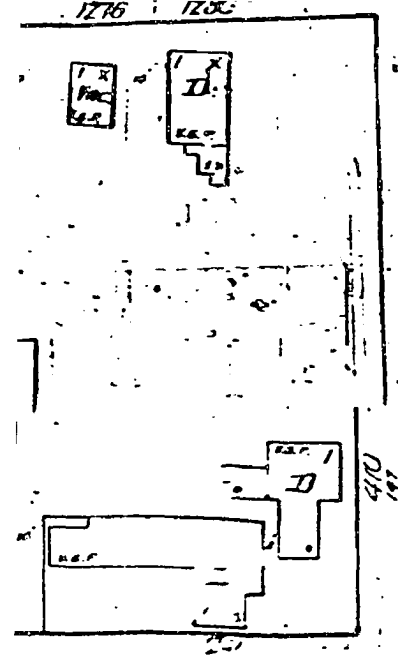


LACEY

4TH AV.







Scale of Feet.

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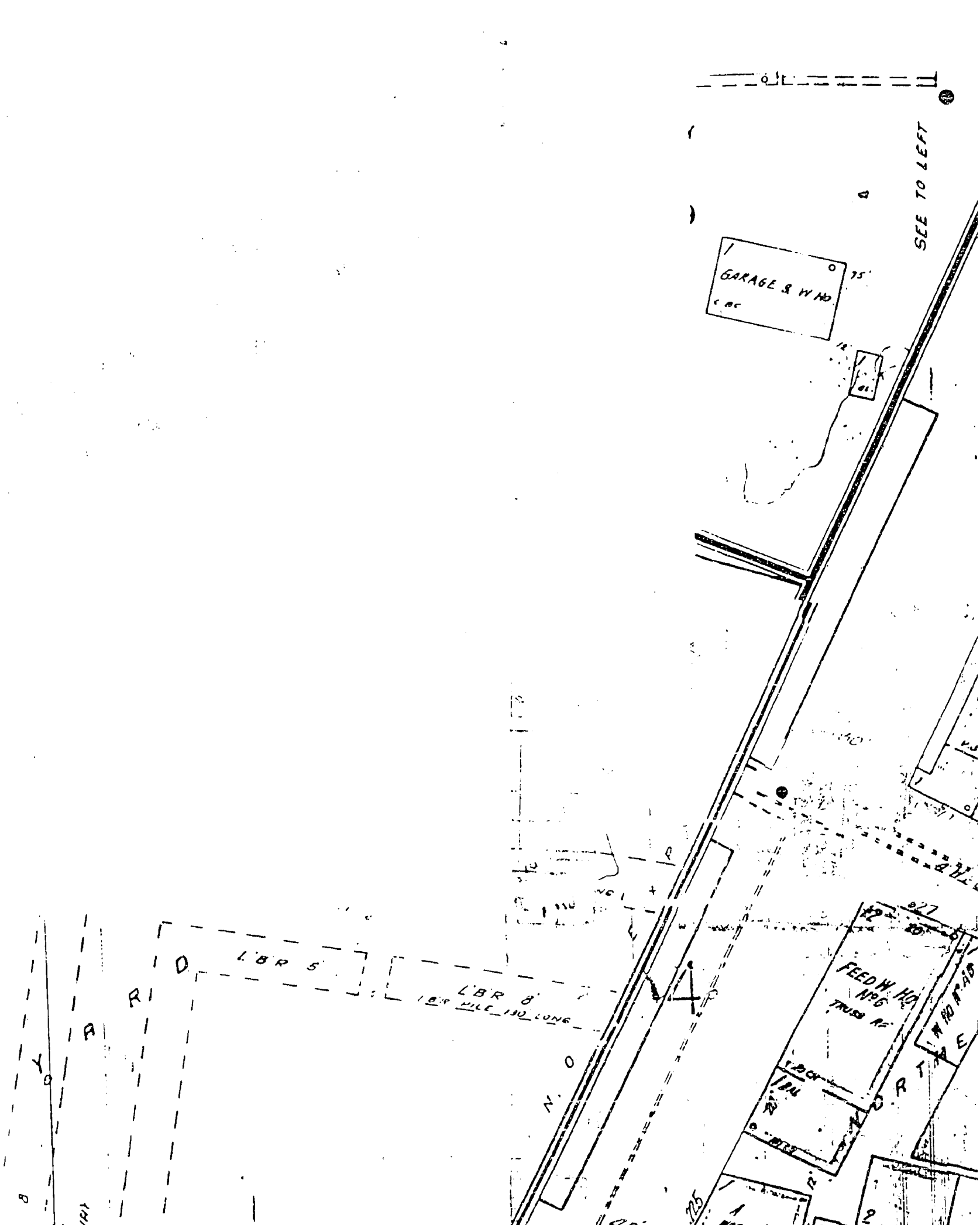
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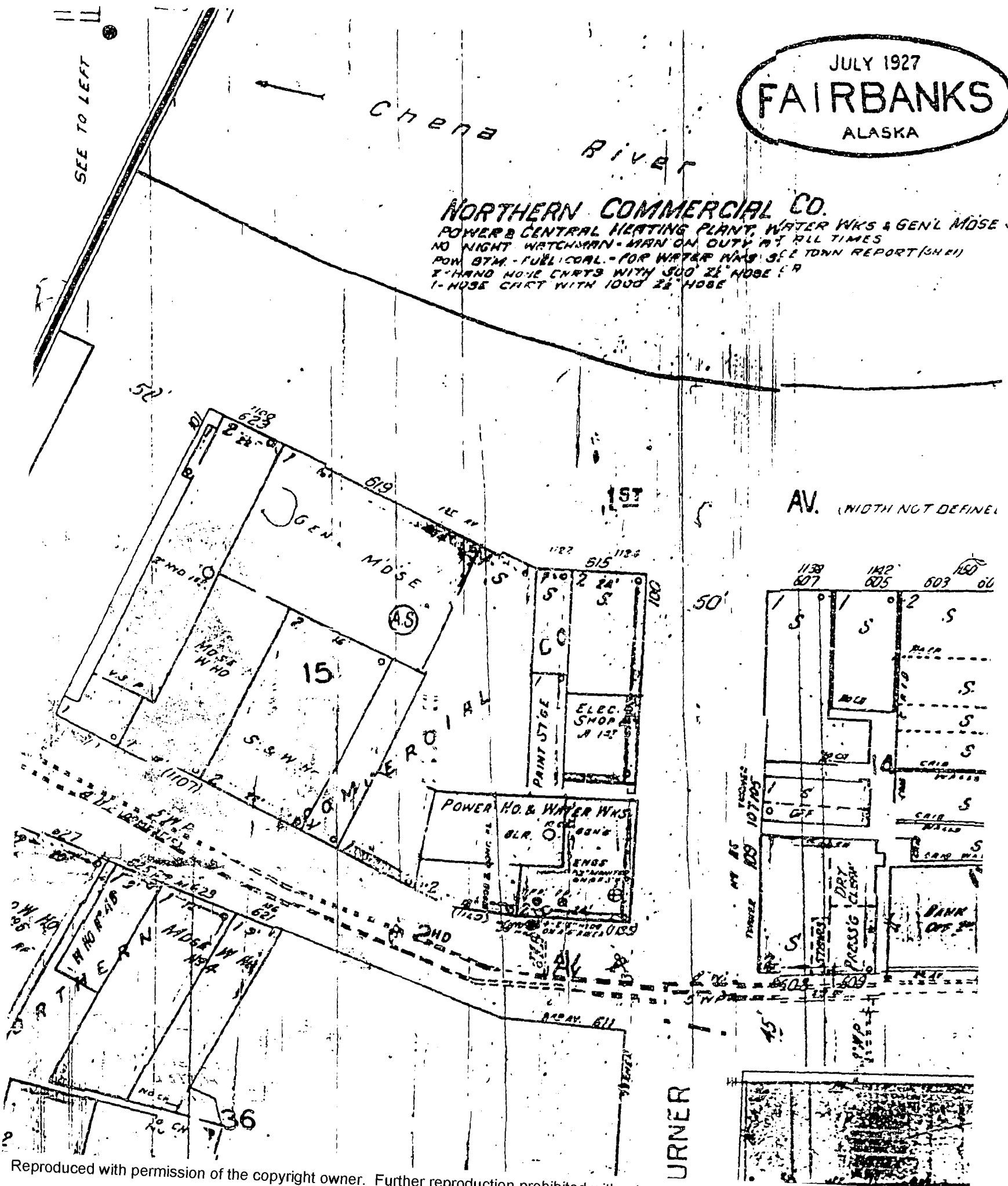


JULY 1927
FAIRBANKS
 ALASKA

Chena River

NORTHERN COMMERCIAL CO.

POWER & CENTRAL HEATING PLANT, WATER WKS & GEN'L MOSE
 NO NIGHT WATCHMAN - MAN ON DUTY AT ALL TIMES
 POW. STM. - FULL COAL - FOR WATER WKS SEE TDNN REPORT (JUL 11)
 2-HAND MOSE CRTS WITH 500 LB MOSE CR
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GEN'L MOSE S.
PORT (SH #1)

STEEL BRIDGE
SPAN 300' LONG

Chena River

**AIRVIEW
HOTEL**

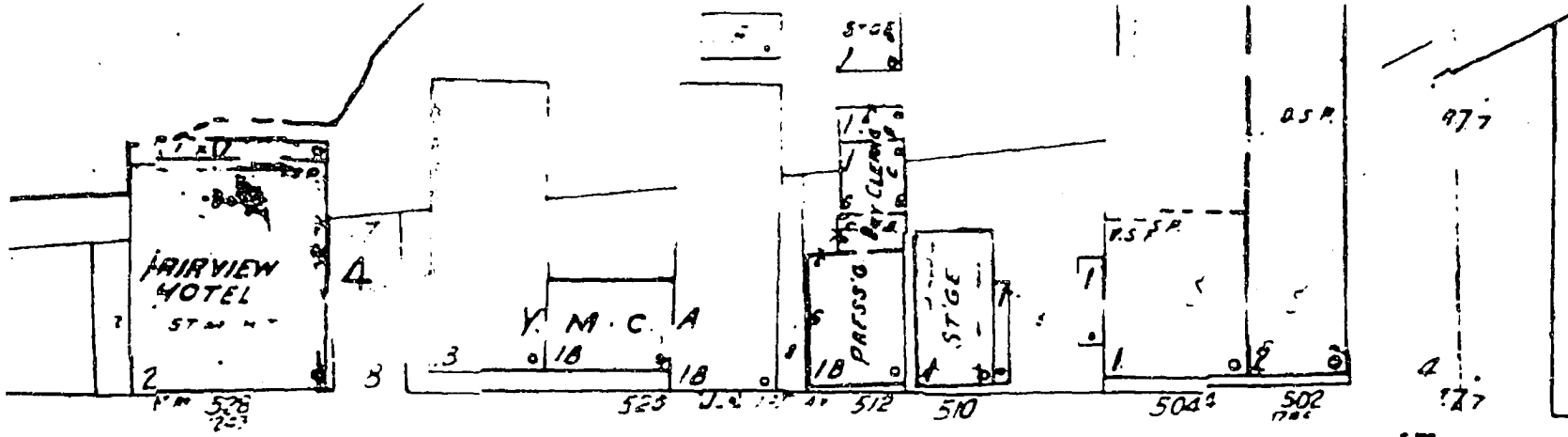
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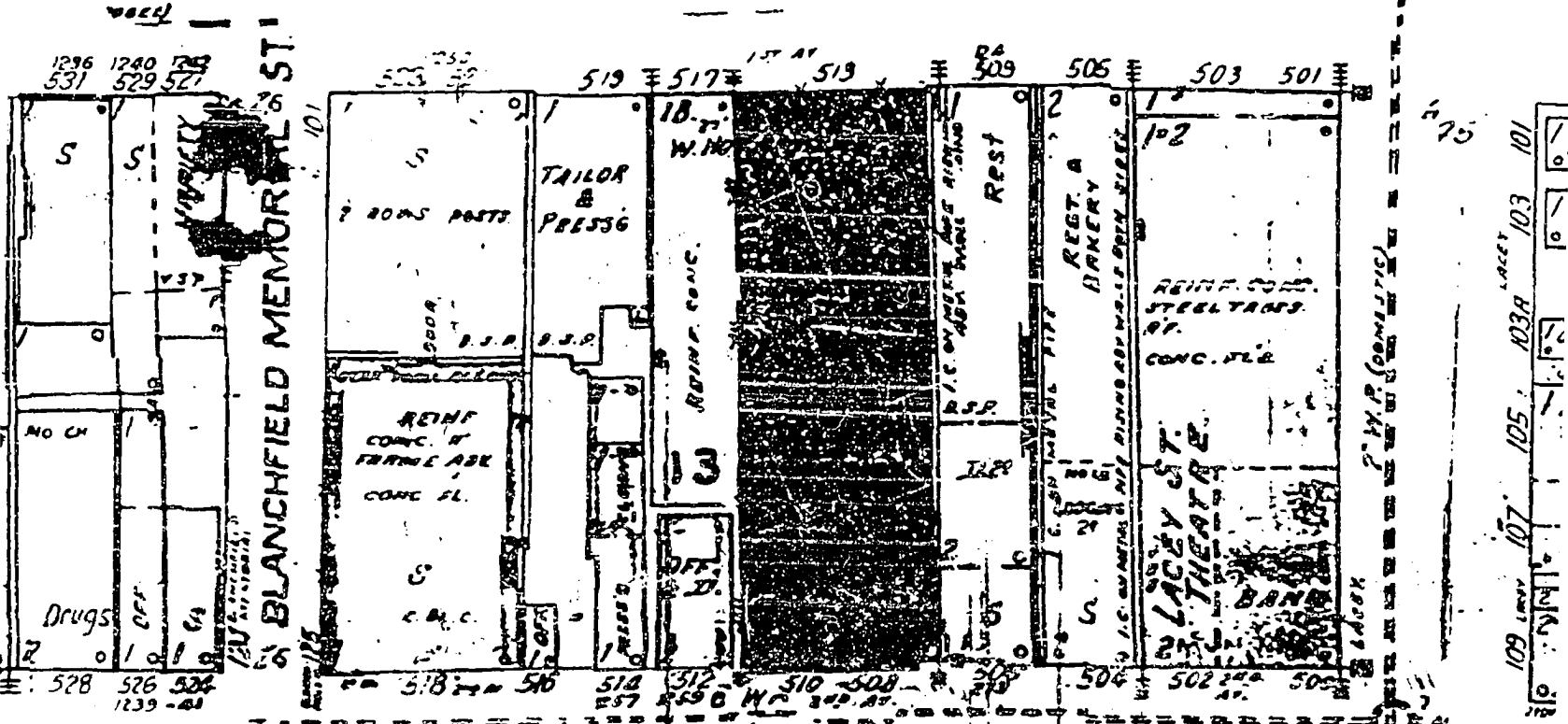
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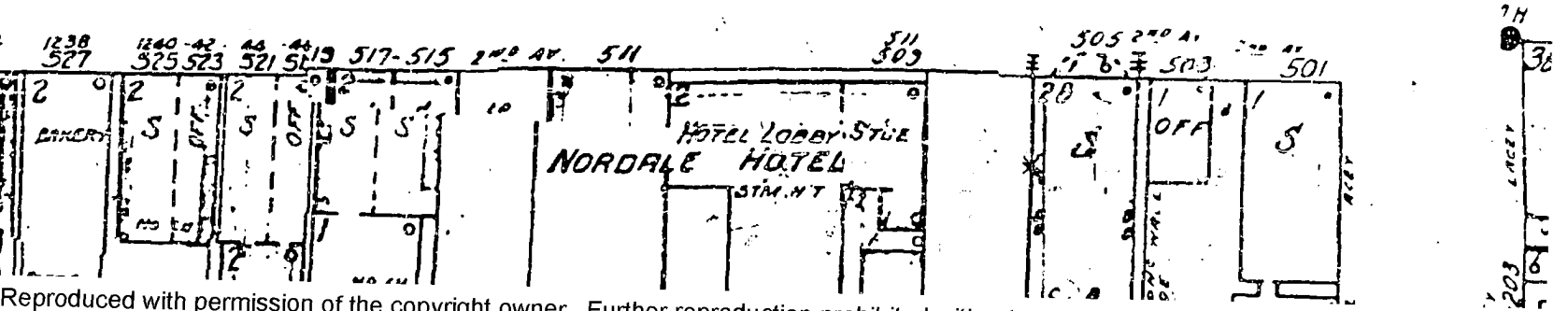
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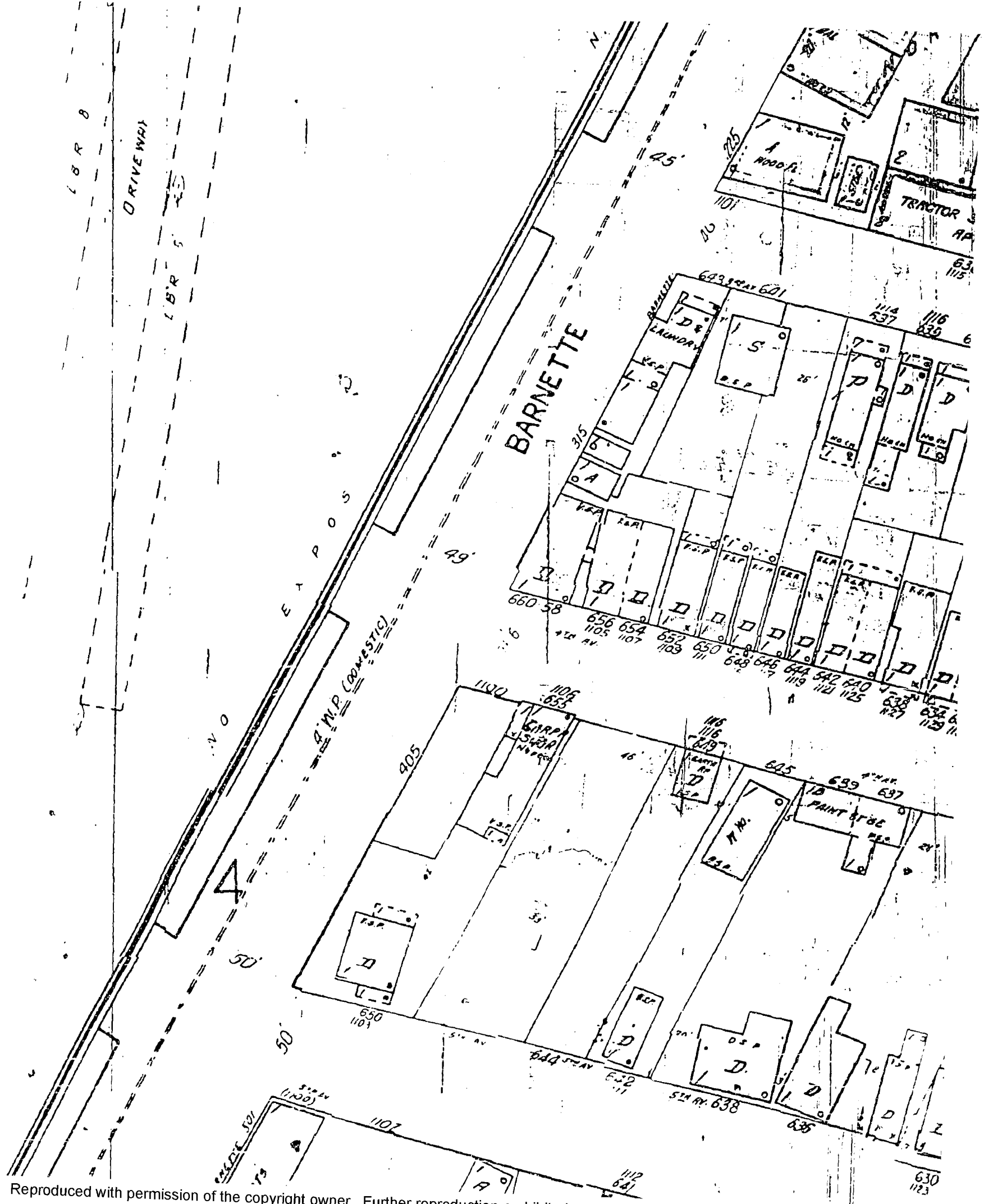
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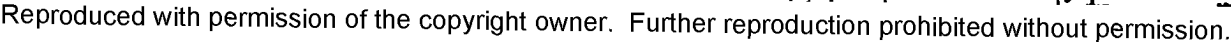
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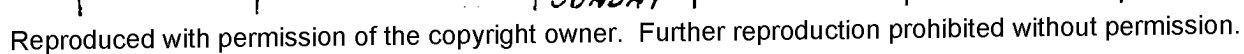


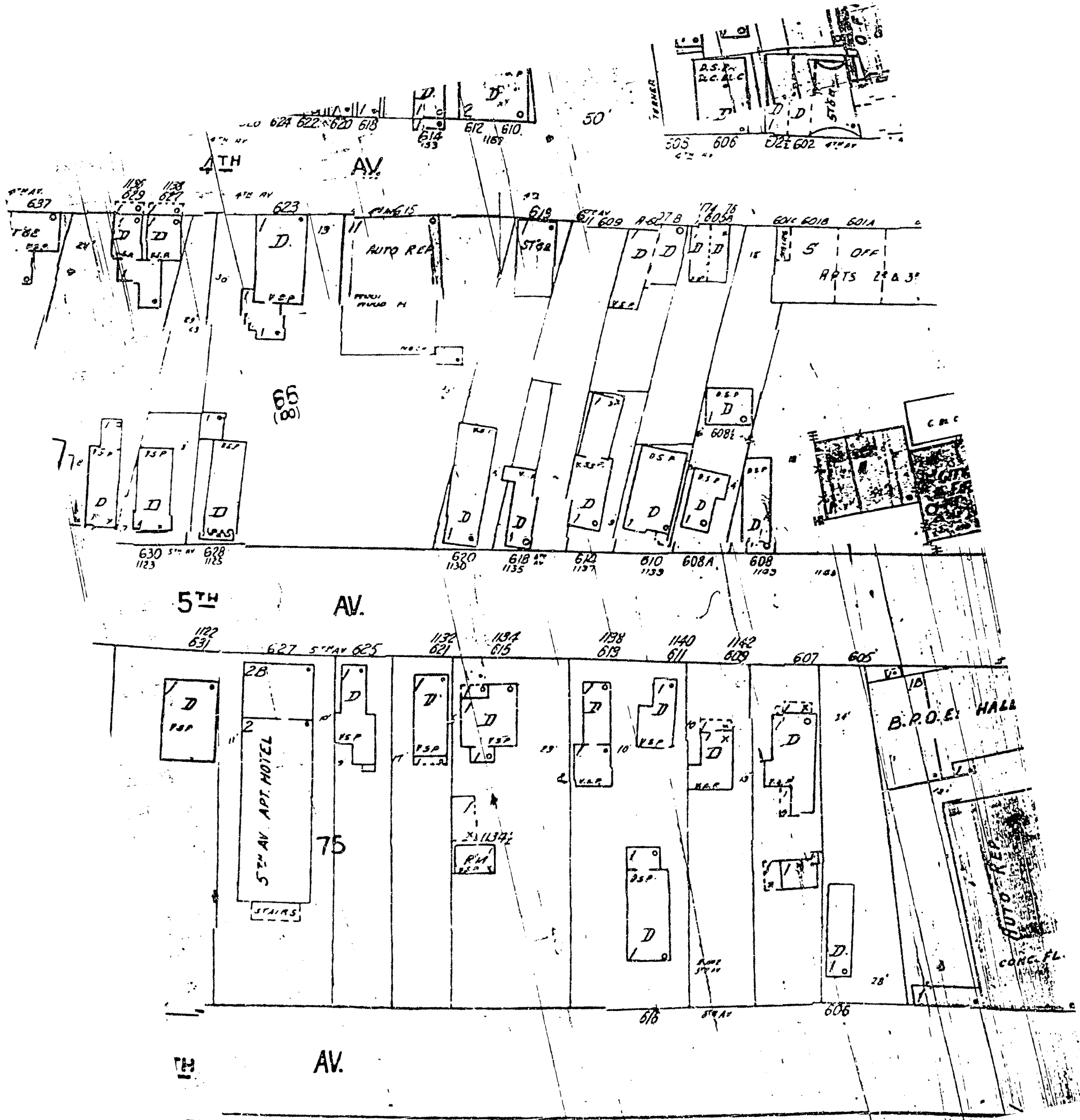












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